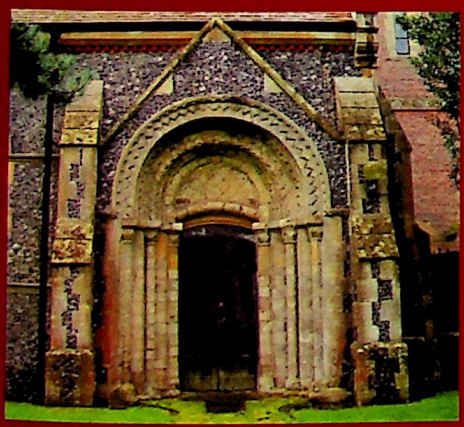
A CATHOLIC-SHI^{C}A ENGAGEMENT

Faith and Reason in Theory and Practice



edited by
Anthony O'Mahony,
Wulstan Peterburs
and
Mohammad Ali Shomali

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For a number of years, a tradition of dialogue has been established between Ampleforth Abbey, the Heythrop Centre for Christianity and Interreligious Dialogue, University of London, and the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute, Qum, Iran. This has resulted in a number of exchange visits between the institutes and, in 2003, led to the first of these Conferences.

In 2005, the Conference at Heythrop and Ampleforth focused on Faith and Reason within the Catholic and Shiʿa traditions, how these two major religious traditions and cultures resource these debates. This publication is a record of that Conference. It includes papers delivered by Catholic and Muslim experts enabling further analysis and reflection on the roles of faith and reason, authority and tradition and morality and praxis within Catholic and Shiʿa thought and its influence on the daily lives of adherents.

Contributors

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INTRODUCTION

The papers contained in this volume are those presented at the Second Catholic-Shi'a Engagement between Ampleforth Abbey, The Centre for Christianity and Inter-religious Dialogue, Heythrop College, University of London, and the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute, Qom, Iran, and hosted by Heythrop College and Ampleforth Abbey in July 2005.*

As with any event, the meeting itself—9-13 July 2005—was but one aspect of a much wider engagement. Behind the scenes much planning and debate went on, starting almost a year prior to the gathering in London on 9 July 2005. Those discussions, which are not recorded here, are themselves an important 'snapshot' of Catholic-Shi'a dialogue, since they were in effect a series of meetings and contacts trying to establish a theme for the next stage of a dialogue that began in 2002. This Catholic-Shi'a dialogue had gone on to stimulate a number of high-profile gatherings in both Iran and the UK. However, a continuing processes of reflection sought to discern what themes might be fruitfully examined to further this essential dialogue.

Shaping a gathering of invited participants in this way is something over which there is a degree of control. But, again as is the case with anything which requires a degree of planning, there are some things which cannot be controlled. Two events perhaps stand out in the way they formed a challenging backdrop to last year's Engagement. Of immediate impact were the events of 7 July, when, as succinctly recorded in the French newspaper *Le Figaro*, 'London [was] Plunged Into Horror' by suicide bombers who struck the capital. Against that background of horror and inevitable tension, the Catholic-Shi'a Engagement was to go ahead at Heythrop College only forty-eight hours later.

* Papers from the first conference are published in *Catholics and Shi'a in Dialogue*, ed. Anthony O'Mahony, Wulstan Peterburs and Mohammad Ali Shomali, Melisende, London, 2004.

As Avril Makhlouf notes in the opening piece in this volume, the first speaker at Heythrop College two days after the London atrocities, Fr John McDade SJ, had himself been on board one of the London tube trains targeted by terrorists. The influential Catholic weekly *The Tablet* reported: 'In response to the many people who had asked him if the Catholic-Shi'a conference would still go ahead, he had replied: "It must take place because we are peoples of peace, and we are friends. On us, on this on-going dialogue, a great deal depends"' (*The Tablet*, 16 July 2005).

The second event—in itself also dramatic but thankfully in a different way—was the death of Pope John Paul II and the election of Pope Benedict XVI as his successor. The world-wide impact of John Paul II's death has been well-chronicled and his legacy in terms of inter-religious dialogue is examined in this volume by both Abbot Timothy Wright and Rev Andrew Unsworth. But what about the new Pope? Many news reports filed in early April 2005 correctly stated that one of the challenges facing the new Pope would be dialogue with Islam. Cardinal Francis George of Chicago even went so far as to say: 'The history between Catholicism and Islam is not a happy one. We want to live at peace in a global society, so a dialogue with Islam is particularly important.' Cardinal Theodore McCarrick of Washington said, 'We have to learn to live with Islam. We have to learn how to dialogue with Islam' (both quoted in the *National Catholic Reporter*, cf. http://www.nationalcatholicreporter.org/update/conclave/pt040905c.htm). Abdellah Redouane, Secretary General of the Islamic Cultural Centre and Mosque in Rome, the largest in the western world, was one of two Islamic leaders invited to the funeral of John Paul II. He expressed his hope that the new Pope would 'continue the dialogue between religious peoples and cultures. That's the most important for us, and I think it's the best way to live together.'

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was elected on the 19 April 2005 to the Office of Peter for the universal Church. From the outset Pope Benedict XVI stated clearly the continued importance of inter-religious dialogue. The day after his election, in his first Message at the end of Mass in the Sistine Chapel, he specifically addressed followers of other religions, wishing 'to assure them that the Church wants to continue to weave an open and sincere dialogue with them, in the search for the true good of the human being and of society.' A few days later, speaking to representatives of Churches and Christian Communities and other non-Christian Religions, he was more specific:

> 'I turn now to you, dear friends from different religious traditions, and I thank you sincerely for your presence at the solemn inauguration of my Pontificate. I offer warm and affectionate greetings to you and to all those who belong to the religions that you represent. I am particularly grateful for the presence in our midst of members of the Muslim community, and I express my appreciation for the growth of dialogue between Muslims and Christians, both at the local and international level. I assure you that the Church wants to continue building bridges of friendship with the followers of all religions, in order to seek the true good of every person and of society as a whole.
>
> 'The world in which we live is often marked by conflicts, violence and war, but it earnestly longs for peace, peace which is above all a gift from God, peace for which we must pray without ceasing. Yet peace is also a duty to which all peoples must be committed, especially those who profess to belong to religious traditions. Our efforts to come together and foster dialogue are a valuable contribution to building peace on solid foundations. Pope John Paul II, my Venerable Predecessor, wrote at the start of the new Millennium that "the name of the one God must become increasingly what it is: a name of peace and a summons to peace" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 55). It is therefore imperative to engage in authentic and sincere dialogue, built on respect for the dignity of every human person, created, as we Christians firmly believe, in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gn 1: 26-27).
>
> 'At the beginning of my Pontificate, I address to you and to all believers of the religious traditions that you represent, as well as to all who seek the Truth with a sincere heart, a pressing invitation together to become artisans of peace, in a reciprocal commitment to understanding, respect and love.'

From these two disparate events—the London bombings and the election of Pope Benedict XVI—rises a ringing endorsement of the need for dialogue to continue. This was echoed by the message sent for the Catholic-Shi'a Engagement 2005 by the then President of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, which is contained in this book.

The Catholic-Shi'a dialogue, then, must continue to deepen this global conversation between these two traditions: Christianity and

Islam. It is timely, too, that the theme chosen for the 2005 Engagement was 'Faith and Reason in Theory and Practice'. Those planning the 2005 Engagement were conscious of their role in bringing people together who clearly wished to dialogue, to engage with each other at a profound level. In the early planning stages of this Engagement, it was clear that there was a desire among both Catholic and Shi'a experts to delve deeper into each others' traditions to examine some of the fundamental aspects at the heart of Catholicism and Shi'a Islam. An initial idea had been to offer, from a Catholic perspective, reflections on John Paul II's 1998 Encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (interestingly enough to our knowledge the only one of the late Pope's Encyclicals available on the Vatican website in Arabic), with equivalent reflections from Shi'a scholars on possible similar documents. But this, it was felt, did not go far enough, or, alternatively, ran the risk of remaining an abstract discussion. What was needed was some sort of reflection and challenging discussion which would enable all those invited, Christian and Muslim, to understand the very principles that lie at the heart of Catholicism and Shi'a Islam and therefore lead to a particular way of believing and living. Hence, after a keynote address on 'The principles and nature of Catholic dialogue in the modern world' from the Director of the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, Dr Justo Lacunza Balda, speakers were invited to offer their own thoughts, from a Catholic or Shi'a perspective, on key pairings in the debate on how we believe and how we live out our beliefs: Faith and Reason, Authority and Tradition, and Morality and Praxis.

Looking back now, there is a degree to which such a plan was prophetic, divinely inspired. It enabled dialogue to move away from the idea of conversation (which continues to be fruitful) and move on to the next stage of engagement, where participants actually look hard at difficult questions about such things as authority and how faith leads to praxis in the modern world, to give but two examples. A well-known national journalist in England recently declared that for 'the first time in a generation, religion is part of the national conversation; people want to talk and read about it' (Madeleine Bunting, *The Guardian*, 19 June 2006). From the faithful, this requires 'an ever-ready openness to understand the metaphors of other faiths. ... people of faith need to be part of the [national] conversation—not determining it, but contributing as equals—bringing to bear the centuries of insight and wisdom on the human condition that they represent.'

This dialogue, this Catholic-Shi'a Engagement, is part of that conversation. But where does it lead? 'To know the religion of another is more than being cognizant of the facts of the other's religious tradition. It involves getting inside the skin of the other, it involves walking in the other's shoes, it involves seeing the world in some sense as the other sees it, it involves asking the other's questions, it involves getting inside the other's sense of "being a Hindu, Muslim, Jew, Buddhist, or whatever"' (F Whaling, *Christian Theology and World Religions. A Global Approach*, Marshall Pickering, London, 1986, 130-131).

Or, as the late Belgian Catholic theologian Fr Jacques Dupuis SJ said in his address to the Annual General Meeting of the Catholic Missionary Union on Monday 20 September 2004 at St Vincent's, Carlisle Place, Westminster: '... dialogue does not serve as a means to a further end. Neither on one side nor on the other does it tend to the "conversion" of one's partner to one's own religious tradition. Rather it tends toward a deeper conversion of each to God. The same God speaks in the heart of both partners; the same Spirit is at work in both. It is the same God who calls and challenges the partners through one another by means of their mutual witness. Thus they become, as it were, for each other and reciprocally a sign leading to God. The proper end of the interreligious dialogue is ultimately the common conversion of Christians and the members of other religious traditions to the same God—the God of Jesus Christ—who calls them together with one another, challenging them through each other. This reciprocal call, a sign of God's call, is surely mutual evangelization. It builds up, between members of various religious traditions, the universal communion which marks the advent of the Reign of God.'

Our hope is that this Engagement may truly serve that purpose of building up communion in the world of inter-religious dialogue. This volume is simply the written record of the communion experienced at Heythrop and Ampleforth in July 2005, and so we would like to take this opportunity to extend our grateful and heartfelt gratitude to all those who prepared these papers and gave permission for publication and to all those who attended the Engagement. These papers are, of course, the work of the individual contributors and so reflect their own views from within their own traditions. The papers stand on their own, and the reader is invited to engage with them in the attempt to understand the positions expressed in a spirit of mutual respect. This is, of course, what true dialogue

is about, creating that space where truth and understanding can be fruitfully pursued and differences acknowledged.† Gratitude is expressed, too, to all those who attended the Catholic-Shi'a Engagement 2005.

The editors would also like to thank Liam Kelly, Ampleforth College, for all his help in initially organizing the conference and supporting the publication of its proceedings. To our publisher Leonard Harrow, Melisende Publishing, London, and to the benefactor, who wishes to remain anonymous, our most sincere thanks for their support and patronage for supporting with generosity the publication of these proceedings which emerged from our Catholic-Shi'a dialogue.

Anthony O'Mahony
Wulstan Peterburs
Mohammad Ali Shomali
September 2006

† In this spirit, the editors have chosen not to revise significantly the English of the papers contributed by non-native English speakers, as it was felt this would be a disservice to the authors, whose distinctive voices and emphases would be lost. The editors have also retained the transliteration systems—where used—as presented by the contributors.

CATHOLIC-SHI^{C}A ENGAGEMENT 2005

Avril Mary Makhlouf

This important event in July 2005, which, like its for-runner in 2003, took place in England in the peaceful and prayerful atmosphere of Ampleforth Abbey, was also preceded by a full day of formal and informal activities at Heythrop College in London.

Some of the participants were the same as those of July 2003; others came fresh to the meeting. There also were significant differences between this encounter and the earlier one. Firstly, the focus in 2003 had been on practical matters such as the religious education of children while this time we were listening diligently to academic lectures of theological and philosophical import. Secondly, the preliminary meeting on Saturday, 9 July, took place in a city still in shock and mourning after the devastating bombing of several major underground rail stations on the preceding Thursday. While there were light-hearted moments during meals and recreation periods we were all conscious of the increased responsibility we now carried to consider the solemn importance of our task, which was to listen with both heart and mind to each other and to respond in kind. Fr John McDade, SJ, principal of Heythrop College in the University of London, said as much in his opening address. He had been on one of the trains affected by the bombings. As he escaped from the wreckage he realized that it was more important than ever that the Engagement continue as planned.

Fr McDade's presentation was followed by a speech in which we received an invaluable outline of the important inter-religious dialogues held in Iran in recent years. This had been prepared for us by Dr Mahmoud Mohammadi Araqi, the President of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organizations of Iran. It is published in this volume.

At Ampleforth Abbey on the Sunday evening there was a welcoming address by Abbot Timothy Wright, included in this volume, entitled 'A Catholic Perspective on Inter-religious Dialogue'. The tone for the next few days was set when he spoke of the importance of a prayerful

and contemplative attitude on the part of each of us who were present. This would ensure attentiveness and listening hearts on the part of all participants. Fr Bonaventure has contributed an article to this volume entitled 'The Rule and Prayer'. It is a heartfelt account of the special contribution of monasticism to this important aspect of religion.

The announced theme of the conference was Faith and Reason in Theory and Practice, and I propose first to discuss the papers that address this issue directly because of my acute awareness of the tremendous importance of this topic in the current state of the world. Also since my mandate is to weave, to find common threads in the discourse, rather than to write a formal introduction, I am free to write from my own perspective.

The Catholic speaker was Fr Patrick Riordan SJ of Heythrop College in the University of London and the Shi'ite speaker was Dr Mohsen Javadi of the University of Qum. However, I have chosen to continue with the lecture of Dr Scott M Thomas before proceeding to that of Dr Mohsen Javadi because its content was so congruent with that of the preceding speaker.

Patrick Riordan in his comprehensive address entitled 'Faith and Reason in the Catholic Tradition' spoke directly to current world issues. With eloquence and wit, and with copious references to important recent Papal encyclicals and to major Catholic philosophers, both ancient and modern, he pointed clearly to the very rocky state of democracy in the world of today due to the separation of the God-given power of reason from faith. As one who has lived for forty adult years in a country that prides itself on being the world's first democracy I found myself agreeing with his words on the problematic state of a democracy that has lost its moral bearings. Of the barely sixty percent of its citizens who go to the polls every four years few seem aware, or if they are aware, to care, that their national democratic system has been undermined by the financial lobbying before and after their elections of the persons aspiring to the legislature, lobbying by both national and multi-national industrial interests and sometimes by barely veiled foreign interests, nor that slowly but surely the idea of world-embracing empire has pre-empted the moral values implied in that country's constitution. To advert to the issue of religious faith and how this is undermined by the neglect of the place of reason in the formation of moral values, one has only to consider how mass media has to an increasing extent come under the rule of the Father of Lies, otherwise known in both Catholic and Shi'a traditions as Satan. Here is where the Catholic concept of natural law as 'a *reasonable* ordering of a collective for a good purpose' has its place. While some very

particular conclusions from this concept might be questioned, nevertheless as a touchstone of common sense for both worldly and religious law it has no equal in human thought.

One of the most pertinent deductions from the application of the principle of natural law quoted by Patrick Riordan is the stance of the Catholic Church that 'by virtue of her function and field of action the Church is quite distinct from the political community and uncommitted to any political system.' But that cannot mean that the Church should not offer moral guidance to the electorate. Indeed it should and while it has often missed the mark, for once I can say that in the United States this is happening. It is on the issue of the under-paid and under-privileged Central Americans who literally form the basis of the economy since they do the most menial work. It is among Church members that we find the most ardent opponents of a Wall between two sister nations, one of which would be reduced to total penury by its appearance. Would that another Wall, funded by American dollars for a similar purpose, would also receive the same moral abhorrence.

A discussion of Scott M Thomas' compelling paper 'Morality and Praxis in the Catholic Tradition' seemed to me to be the logical continuation of points raised by the writer of the previous paper. As I read his well-constructed paper I was thrilled to the marrow of my bones. Not since the glory days of living in post-World-War II Britain have I felt so elated. For at that time the Catholic Church through the Jesuit institution in Oxford known as the Catholic Workers' College played a honourable role in the transformation of the British political scene. The graduates of their courses played an immensely important role in the Trade Union movement. These men, generally drawn from the ranks of the important trade unions, became eloquent speakers who speedily rose through the ranks, able to overcome their Marxist colleagues and so to become nationally recognised leaders. I recall the days when I listened to the proceedings of the Trades Union annual meeting as one was assured of well-informed and thoughtful discussion of national issues. I am a Catholic Christian today because of the sound moral formation I received through these speakers.

Like Patrick Riordan, much of Scott Thomas' discourse is drawn from his study of a leading Catholic moral philosopher, Alasdair MacIntyre of the University of Notre Dame in the USA. Scott Thomas emphasizes the urgent need for inter-religious study of the developmental issues facing human society today so that the innate values of the human person may predominate over other important but lesser issues.

There were of course papers on moral issues by Shi'ite speakers, four in fact. However they seemed to me to fall into two categories, theological and spiritual reflections on morality. I have discussed the two I saw as more related to theological issues directly following the papers on authority and tradition. The two that connected more closely with spirituality I discussed after these.

We now come to the important topic of authority and tradition in the Catholic and Shi'ite religions. There were two Catholic speakers on this topic and three Shi'ite speakers, but the time allotted for the submission of papers elapsed before the Catholic speakers had submitted theirs.* Therefore I am doing my humble best to speak for the Catholic position.

The term authority, which is best paraphrased as "creative leadership" can be used in Catholicism both loosely and precisely. Thus, any Catholic has the right and duty to speak out with authority for his or her beliefs whenever these are questioned or challenged. Parents have authority over their children and so on. When the term is used precisely in matters ecclesiastical of moral and doctrinal importance the usual term for authority is magisterium. The magisterium consists of human beings, the Pope and the bishops. Now magisterium is best understood as an important organ of a living body. In other words Catholics know themselves from Scripture as bound together as closely as all the elements in any living organism. Each Catholic has a part to play in this body where the magisterium is understood as the ruling element. But every Catholic has the duty to both understand and also to question the magisterium when their statements are not clear or seen to require further clarification or modification in the light of the appearance of new facts or circumstances. Such facts could be derived from empirical or academic study, or from scientific, psychological and sociological research. Now the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope when speaking alone *ex cathedra* on vital issues of faith and morals was not so defined until Vatican Council I in the mid-nineteenth century. It was designed to be used in possibly disturbed times in which the whole magisterium might find itself embattled and unable to meet with the result that only the Pope might find himself able to speak out. It has only been used twice and only to define traditional doctrines already part of Catholic belief.

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* Abbot Mark Serna's paper presented at Ampleforth, 'Authority and Tradition in the Catholic Tradition', is included in this volume, along with an additional paper by Wulstan Peterburs.

Tradition is a vital element in Catholicism. It stems from the fact that not all Christian beliefs were precisely written down in the Bible, the Holy Scriptures. Jesus Christ himself left no writings whatsoever, he preached by word and example. Catholics regard as authoritative those accounts of Jesus Christ written down by contemporaries of Jesus Christ who for the most part knew him personally. They believe that these writings were inspired by the Holy Spirit and are known as the New Testament as distinct from the inspired writings of the Jewish community prior to Jesus' coming, which are known as the Old Testament.

But tradition did not die out with the last living witness to the earthly life of Jesus Christ for the simple reason that the Christian community grew by leaps and bounds primarily by the preaching and example of Jesus' followers. It still does. Because of this the life, work and sometimes writings of women and men whose lives have been thoroughly scrutinized after their deaths, become part of the living tradition of the Christian community inasmuch as they have by their holy living and spiritual insights added to our understanding of the essential Christian beliefs. Those persons deemed to be of especial importance are honoured with the title of 'Doctor (Teacher) of the Church'.

I move now to the paper by Mohsen Javadi, entitled 'Faith and Reason in Shi'ite Thought'. Here I discovered a remarkable congruence with Catholic theology in the understanding of the relationship between faith and reason. Mohsen Javadi has chosen to examine different dimensions of the same issues. Of special interest to me as I read his paper was the realization of the similarity of the thinking I encountered here with that of the Catholic theologian of the contemplative life, the 16th century Spanish priest, John of the Cross.

Perhaps it is because of this that I found it easier to begin this brief account of his paper at the end rather than at the beginning to show clearly what I saw as a most important statement. I quote Mohsen Javadi's last sentence: 'Thus, whenever there seems to be a conflict between a position made by reason and another made by religion we must re-examine both and be sure that at least there has been one mistake, whether in understanding real judgment of reason or real judgment of religion.'

Words of wisdom indeed, for what is implied is that human understanding is always fallible, that we formulate principles of action by work in common, not by trying to do this alone.

Continuing to go reverently backwards through this paper I come to the Shi'ite tradition that moral properties are rooted in the very essence of things. Tomorrow morning as I begin my prayer by watching the sunrise I shall meditate on this view of reality that nothing in the universe is morally neutral. Therefore nothing I do or say in morally neutral. I especially liked the phrase 'revelation is a mirror of God's creation' followed by the statement that by using our reason we can better see what the reality in that mirror is. That implies, as Mohsen Javadi writes, 'that the Qur'an has made thought, remembrance (that is, as I understand it, actively bringing God to mind), conditional upon piety' and that piety is nothing more or less than the healthy fear of God, the kind of wholesome fear we inculcate in children so that they do not hurt themselves.

From which I deduce that regular cleansing of the mind and the emotions is essential to healthy action. Thus, as Mohsen Javadi writes: (That) "this revealed knowledge that God has sent to help people to find their happiness, unfortunately, in many cases is misunderstood." He goes on to list the singular and collective wrong use of allegedly religious beliefs that are used to justify occupation of the lands of others, financial corruption, terrorism and so on. It is clear that the Shi'ite and indeed all religiously inclined human beings must continue to understand beliefs and never rely on what is conceived as simple faith.

Again he shows clearly that 'Shi'ite theology has taken the form of a philosophical theology.'

I leave this fascinating paper at this point and invite the reader to begin at its beginning. Not far along will be discovered the congruence between the Shi'ite use in *kalam* (discursive theology) of the term reason and the Christian concept of general revelation.

Before moving on to the next three papers by Shi'ite speakers, one of whom has added Faith to the title of his paper it is pertinent that there be here a brief discussion of the relation of faith and reason in Catholicism. While this topic deserves a much more prolonged discussion I have decided simply to refer readers to the great letter of the late John Paul II to the bishops of the Catholic Church entitled in English 'Faith and Reason' but generally known by its Latin title 'Fides et Ratio'. I content myself with quoting the opening paragraph which reads:

> 'Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the

> human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves.'

It goes without saying that there is a limit to how far human reason alone can attain to that knowledge of God, and that faith therefore is God's own intervention in our lives enabling us to attain those lofty goals.

As I began to read the outstanding paper by Dr Mohammad 'Ali Shomali of the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute of Qum entitled 'Reason, Faith and Authority: A Shi'ite Perspective', I speedily realised that there is no major difference between Catholic and Shi'ite beliefs on the relationship between reason and faith. When we come to his discussion of authority we find a discussion of obedience and its religious signification. Mohammad Shomali lays before us four principles, the first being that obedience is owed only to God, the second being that of human freedom which means that no other person may demand as of right obedience. The third principle deals with God's delegation of obedience to parents and others and the fourth with the authority of the Prophet.

The remainder of this paper gives us a singularly lucid account of Shi'ite teaching on these principles. Much as I would like to expand on this brief statement I see no point. It is infinitely better to read the whole paper. I therefore commend it for careful reading.

Dr Ghasem Kakaie of Shiraz University in his paper 'Authority and Tradition' gives us an interesting perspective on authority. He begins by defining it as *wilayah*, a term having a number of meanings, which at first glance, seem quite different but in fact overlap. These are intimacy, assistance, love, and tenure of office. All of these qualities pertain in the highest degree to God. They imply that God is both the guardian of the earthly universe and also of the world-to-come and as such is to be obeyed. From that point Ghasem Kakaie goes on to assert the need of revelation and thus the role of the Prophet Muhammad as God's spokesman in issues pertaining to both worlds.

He goes on to discuss particularly from the Shi'ite point of view the role of continuing infallibility seen as vested primarily in the direct descendants of the Prophet beginning with his daughter, Fatima. Their statements are seen as authoritative and after the occultation (temporary disappearance) of the last of these persons jurists have taken on the responsibility of leading and guiding the believers.

In our time their role has crystallised for the Iranian people in the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is important to note that Shi'ite jurists see it as having been accepted by the people and thus making Iran in essence a democracy.

This clear and succinct paper is important reading for an understanding of the current political status of Iran and the stance of its government.

The detailed paper 'Authority from a Shi'ite Perspective' of Dr Muhammad Legenhausen of the Imam Khomeini Education Institute in Qum expands all the points made by Dr Kakaie. His aim is to describe these in a manner accessible to Catholics and he bases his arguments on verses of the Holy Qur'an. He especially discusses the notion of priesthood and sacrament neither of which exist in Islam. The rituals of bearing witness, prayer, alms, fasting and *hajj* (pilgrimage) take the place of what is known in Catholicism as grace-conveying actions.

Muhammad Legenhausen then discusses in a most interesting manner the issue of authority by differentiating what he calls spiritual authority from religio-political authority. He sees the Sufi orders as analogous to authority as exercised in the Catholic Church and the jurists as the political authority, which in an Islamic state includes regulations over religious practice. He discusses at some length the differences between Shi'ite and Sunni jurisprudence. In the Shi'ite tradition each Muslim is obligated to find a jurist to serve as his religious guide. He or she is free to find his or her person.

Shi'ite tradition is then discussed in detail, where necessary in comparison with Sunni tradition, and also with Catholicism. Thus for the Shi'a the four sources or bases of legal rulings are the Qur'an, the Sunna (recorded practices of the Prophet for both Sunni and Shi'a), (for Shi'a narrations of the words and deeds of the twelve Imams are also taken as authoritative), reason (for Shi'a) and analogy (for Sunni) and consensus. It should be noted that in this context the term Imam refers only to the twelve direct linear descendants of the Prophet.

The next four papers by Shi'ite academics take up the themes of morality and ethics, the first two of these more theological and the second two to my mind more spiritual.

The paper by Dr Gholamreza Raeseian of Ferdowsi University entitled 'Moral System of Islam' is a succinct account of the human being and his or her destiny. Each human is a composite of soul and body, but

only the soul remains after death, since the body decays. Therefore its development is the supreme task of each individual. A detailed guide for the achievement of this task is outlined in verses from the Qur'an and from the infallible Imams.

On the other hand, the paper by Dr Abbas Ali Shameli of the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute of Qum called 'Challenges and Dilemmas in Making Values and Ideals' is a closely-argued paper based on the important work of Shahid Muhammad Baqir Sadr. In this the author offers from the Shi'ite point of view both a critique of several secular models and his view of what constitutes a sound basis for universal value making.

Dr Reza Shah-Kazemi in his to my mind very important 'Theocentric Ethics in Islam: From Spiritual Consciousness to Moral Conscience' offers an intriguing and timely approach to the same topic beginning with a concept of all-encompassing divine beauty which leads us towards a positive approach to conscience formation. One could say perhaps that anything that is ugly and disfiguring is indicative of evil and according to one's perception of the origin of the ugliness should either arouse us to pity and concern to remedy this, or total abhorrence of the substantial evil we have come to recognise.

Lastly, 'Faith and Morality in Islam and Christianity' by Dr Mohammad Fanaei Eshkevari gives a prayerful and practical guide to the question of how faith and morality are inextricably inter-related both in those persons chiefly motivated by the carrying-out of practical good deeds and those others who begin their spiritual journey stand-point of the contemplation of God's truth and beauty.

We began our days of contemplative listening in the present time, always however with an eye to the future. Leonard Harrow in his paper 'Historical Aspects of Catholic-Shi'a Dialogue in Iran' gave us a most welcome and erudite journey into the past. He gives us both depth of understanding of the present situation and hope for the future.

May all our endeavours to know and love the Truth be rooted in a desire to manifest the Glory of God.

Avril Mary Makhlouf PhD
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2 May 2006

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

CATHOLIC-SHI'A ENGAGEMENT 2005

FAITH AND REASON IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

Dear Abbot Timothy,

It is a pleasure for me to greet the participants in the conference 'Faith and reason in theory and practice' which will be held at Heythrop College and Ampleforth Abbey. I would have liked to be with you, but other commitments do not permit this.

Faith is essentially a human response to God, an act of loving submission to him, which human beings are enabled to accomplish by the gift of divine assistance. It includes the submission of the will, but at the same time comprises an assent to what God has revealed, and so has an intellectual content.

The human mind is naturally curious. The search to understand the world around has given rise to the various sciences in which progress is still being made. There is also a desire to understand revelation, and to understand the world in the light of revelation, which has produced the science of theology. This too progresses. In trying to come to grips with empirical reality, an attempt will be made to produce a synthesis which satisfactorily makes sense of all the data, but sometimes there will be a residue which refuses to fit into the theoretical framework. New reflection is required in order to offer an improved synthesis.

From the Christian point of view, such theological endeavour is to be encouraged and, as long as care is taken to remain faithful to the scriptural base and to the official pronouncements of the teaching authority in the Church, there is no need for fear.

It is not for me to dwell further on this theme. I wish only to express my satisfaction that it has been selected for study and that both its practical and theoretical aspects are to be examined. I wish you very fruitful exchanges.

Yours sincerely,

Archbishop Michael L Fitzgerald
President
Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

REASON, FAITH AND AUTHORITY: A SHI'ITE PERSPECTIVE

Mohammad Ali Shomali

There are four sources on which from a Shi'a point of view any investigation about Islam has to be based: the Glorious Qur'an, the *Sunnah* (including sayings, actions and tacit approval of the Prophet), reason and consensus. After a careful consideration of these four sources, it becomes clear that the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* both originate from revelation and that consensus is reducible to the *Sunnah*. Therefore, there are two types of sources:

> —the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* that constitute the revealed or the transmitted sources *(al-adillah al-naqliyyah)*
> —reason or intellect that constitutes the rational source *(al-dalil al-'aqli)*.[1]

It has to be noted that what has been said above does not mean that every single enquiry must be based on *all* the aforementioned sources; rather it means that there is no way to establish the truths about Islam other than by referring to one or more of the above sources. There are fields of studies that are completely intellectual such as natural theology or philosophy, and there are fields of study that are purely based on revealed information such as revealed theology, and there are fields that rely on both, such as law and morality.[2]

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[1] Here we mean by 'reason' an instrument or a faculty of understanding of theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge. With the first, we can obtain some knowledge about existing things in the world, and with the second we can acquire some knowledge about what humans must or must not do. In other words, reason enables us to know what *is* there in the world and ability to know what one *ought to do*. For example, see Mohammad Taghi Misbah Yazdi, *Dorus-e Falsafe-ye Akhlagh*, Ettela'at Publications, Tehran, 1994.

[2] Al-Ghazali, a renowned Sunni thinker from the Ash'arite tradition, divides theological issues into three categories: issues that can only be known through religious sources, issues that can only be known with the intellect, and issues that can be known in both ways. He mentions the

It should also be noted that when Muslim scholars mention the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* as revealed sources this does not mean that they do not believe in previous revelations. Indeed, it is part of Islamic faith to confirm all the previous prophets and revelations. The only problem here is how to identify what was actually revealed to them. Therefore, whenever something is known to represent a fact or a universal or unconditional rule revealed previously by God that too is certainly accepted.

Thus, we can conclude that there are two major *common* ways to understand and discover religious truths: revelation and reason.[3] The Shi'a believe that reason is a reliable source of knowledge and that it is in complete harmony with revelation. According to some hadiths, God has two proofs *(hujjah)* through which humans can understand His will: the internal one, reason *(al-'aql)*, and the external one, the prophets. Sometimes reason is called 'the internal prophet' and the prophets are called 'the external reason'. There is an established rule among Shi'a jurists that whatever judgement is made by reason is the same as that made by religion *(shar')* and vice versa.

In what follows, I will try to explore the status of reason in Islam and then I will refer to the different roles of reason in general and in understanding moral values in particular. Having studied revelation and reason as two sources of understanding Islam, I will briefly refer to the Shi'a understanding of faith and authority.

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visibility of God (according to the Ash'arites, God is visible, at least Hereafter) as an example for the first category and exclusiveness of creating movements in God for the second category. In respect to cases in which both intellect and *naql* (transmitted knowledge) have judgement, al-Ghazali adds that whenever we receive something from religious sources, we have to see what the rational judgement is. If intellect allows us to do so we have to follow the religious sources. But if that thing is rationally impossible we have to interpret that text in another way, since there is no disharmony or contradiction between religion and intellect. Then, al-Ghazali adds that in cases in which intellect is silent again we have to accept and follow the demands of religious sources. He insists that rational permission for possibility of something is not required. What is really required is to be free from rational impossibility. 'There is a [subtle] difference between these two, which unintelligent people sometimes fail to recognise.' (*Al-Iqtisad fi al-I'tiqad*, [Arabic], p. 133)

[3] Things which are understood through personal intuitions or mystical experiences are valid for the very person who has had these intuitions or experiences, and is certain about the truth and validity of them or beliefs which are based on them. However, these are not included in our discussion here, partly because this sort of knowledge cannot be communicated through discussion or argumentation to others. The only way to learn and accept these issues is to undergo the same experiences.

The status of reason

Islam regards reason as one of the greatest blessings bestowed by God on human beings. It is by means of reason that we understand ourselves and the world around us. It is by means of reason that we realise the necessity of investigating our origin and the One who has created us. If we had no reason, we would not be responsible for our acts or beliefs. In Shi'i Islam in particular, great emphasis has always been placed on reason and the rational sciences. This emphasis derives from the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet and the Imams of his household. The Qur'an says in several verses:

> Surely there are signs in this for those who ponder. (13: 4; 16: 12; 30: 24)

The Qur'an also condemns more than once those who do not think or use their reason. The following two traditions, selected from the large number of hadiths available on the subject, show the place of reason in Shi'a belief. Imam Sadiq says:

> Whoever has intellect has faith and whoever has faith will enter Paradise.[4]

With reason one comes to understand the truth, to believe in Islam and follow the teachings of the Prophet, and consequently will be able to enter Paradise. In an insightful hadith addressing one of his companions, Hisham b. Hakam, Imam Musa Kazim said:

> With reason God completes His proof. God has equipped His prophets with the ability of expressing their ideas in a way that all people can understand. God has shown people His lordship through reason.

Then the Imam recited the following verse of the Glorious Qur'an, 'Your God is the One God, there is no god but God who is the Compassionate the Merciful ... Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of days and night, and in the ships that

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[4] *Usul al-Kafi*, Vol. 1, p. 11.

move in the sea, and in the rain that descends from the sky to bring life on the earth, and all kinds of animals that God has spread over the earth, and also in the movement of the wind and the clouds which God has kept between the earth and the sky—in all these there are signs for those who are thoughtful.' Then the Imam said:

> God has made these signs a proof to show people that they have a Creator Who arranges everything for them and Who directs everything, because God then says 'surely there are signs in these facts for those who use their reason.'[5]

Many other references to the Qur'an are made in this tradition to show that God in His final message considers reason as the only means by which human beings become responsible. It is unanimously accepted that one of the conditions of moral or legal responsibility is to have sound reason. If someone is insane, he is not considered as responsible for his acts. What is expected of people in religion also varies according to their mental and rational capacity. Those with a higher degree of intelligence or learning are expected to be more knowledgeable, pious and obedient than others.[6]

On the continuity and development of the philosophical tradition, S M H Tabataba'i (1892-1981), himself the most celebrated contemporary master of Islamic philosophy, writes:

> In the same way that from the beginning Shi'ism played an effective role in the formation of Islamic philosophical thought, it was also a principal factor in the further development and propagation of philosophy and the Islamic sciences ... In the same manner, in the other intellectual sciences, there appeared many outstanding figures such as Nasir al-Din Tusi (who was both philosopher and mathematician) and Birjandi, who was also an outstanding mathematician.
>
> All the sciences, particularly metaphysics or theosophy *(falsafah-i ilahi* or *hikmat-i ilahi)*, made major advances thanks to the indefatigable endeavour of Shi'ite scholars. This fact can be seen if one compares the works of Nasir al-Din Tusi, Shams

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[6] For example, we read in a divine saying *(al-hadith al-qudsi)* in *Usul al-Kafi*, the Book of Reason and Ignorance, that 'God rewards and punishes people in proportion to their reason.'

> al-Din Turkah, Mir Damad, and Sadr al-Din Shirazi with the writings of those who came before them.[7]

On the place of intellectual sciences among the Shi'a, Yann Richard writes:

> Today, however, one of the originalities of Shi'ite Islam is to recognize that metaphysical speculation and philosophical discourse have a certain place in religious knowledge. The Centre for Theological Studies at Qom is certainly the only place of Islamic studies in the world where one dares comment on the philosophical treatises of Aristotle or Avicenna, and where the post-Platonic philosophical tradition has remained alive. Ayatollah Khomeini was known at Qom up till the beginning of the 1950s for his philosophy course.[8]

Different roles of reason

In general, reason contributes to religious sciences in the following major areas:

I. The first step towards religion, inquiring into it and searching for its truth, is taken by reason. It is reason that drives us to take the issue seriously and tells us that our interests would be harmed if the claims of religion are true and we fail to discover and believe in them. According to the Qur'an, God requires all human beings to exercise their rational faculty and to ponder on His signs and communications in the universe. On many occasions unbelievers are condemned and criticized because of their failure to think or to act according to rational requirements. For example, they are condemned because of their blind imitation of their ancestors, and there are many verses containing rhetorical questions calling on people to think, and as the following: 'Do not they think?', or 'Do not they ponder?'

II. The second role of reason is to set up standards and logical processes for reasoning and for inference from the scriptures. Once we have

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[7] Tabataba'i, *Shi'ite Islam*, Part II, 'Outstanding Intellectual Figures of Shi'ism'.

[8] Richard, p. 61.

started our research and investigation, it is again reason that instructs us on how to think and how to argue. It is also reason that tells us to be fair and committed to the truth during and after the entire process of rational discovery.

III. The third is to understand the realities of the world, such as the existence of God and the truth of religion. The Shi'a believe that by the exercise of reason every person can come to understand that God exists, that He has sent certain people as His messengers, and that Resurrection will take place. Indeed, it is obligatory for every Muslim to examine and question his beliefs until he attains certainty, and to be able to support his beliefs with valid logical arguments, including the intellectual ones. Muslims are not allowed to say that they believe in God for no particular reason, or call themselves Muslim simply because their parents are Muslim, or because they were born in a Muslim community. Faith is a matter of reasoning, not of imitation. Everyone is advised to secure his faith with sound arguments. In this way, one can have complete confidence in his belief, and nothing can cause him to doubt it.[9] Of course, once the truth of a given prophet or book is established, many further truths can be learnt from that prophet or that book.

IV. The fourth is to understand and present moral and legal principles, such as the wrongness of oppression and the rightness of justice. Details are, of course, provided by religious sources, although the process of

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[9] M R Muzaffar in his commentary on reason says the following:
We believe that Allah has endowed us with the faculty of the intellect *('aql)*, and that He has ordered us to ponder over His Creation, noting with care the signs of His Power and His Glory throughout the entire universe as well as within ourselves. It is stated in the Qur'an:

> 'We shall show them Our signs on the horizons and in themselves, till it is clear to them that it is the Truth.' (41: 53)

Allah has shown His disapproval of those who blindly follow the ways of those who were before them:

> 'They say: 'No, but we will follow such things as we found our fathers doing'. What! And if their fathers had no understanding of anything.' (2: 170)

And He has shown His dislike for those who follow nothing but their own personal whims:

> 'They follow naught but an opinion.' (6: 117)

Indeed, our intellect forces us to reflect upon Creation so as to know the Creator of the universe, just as it makes it necessary for us to examine the claims of someone to prophethood and to consider the truth of his miracles. It is not correct to accept the ideas of someone without criticism, even if that person has the gift of great knowledge or holds an esteemed position.

understanding the scriptures and the implications of religious judgements again is governed by reason. For example, if God says that you must perform Hajj (the pilgrimage to Mecca), it rationally implies that we must make all necessary preparations, such as buying tickets or obtaining a visa. If there is a conflict between two obligations such as saving an innocent life and performing our prayers, what should we do? In this case, even if there is no explicit or specific religious instruction we still rationally understand that we must act according to the certain and clear judgement of our reason, which is to save the person's life.

All the above roles of reason are recognised and, indeed, encouraged and urged in Islam. In contrast, the role of revelation or the scripture in religious sciences can be summed up as follows:

> —confirming truths that are already known by reason;
> —teaching truths that are not known by reason, such as the details of the resurrection and detailed injunctions of moral and legal systems;[10]
> —establishing due recompense sanctions through the religiously determined system of reward and punishment.

Here I should make two points:

a. One has to distinguish between the decisive and certain rational judgements and things such as guessing or personal opinions or weak arguments. There have always been some people who introduced their ideas, or even they themselves thought so, as enjoying rational grounds, while after consideration it becomes clear that there is no basis for such a claim. Just as those people who represent their ideas as Islamic ideas, while religious sources do not support them in any known way.

b. Although reason is recognised as an independent source of knowledge, it has its own limits. There are many things on which reason has no judgement and is silent, because they are beyond its scope. Therefore, there might be many things that we can understand by other ways of understanding such as perception, intuition or revelation that do not fall in the scope of reason. You cannot really understand through rational

[10] Having verified the truth of the Prophet or the Qur'an, we come to know many things that we were unable to know by ourselves, because of our lack of access to certain realms of reality or certain evidence.

arguments what a rose smells like or what a mother feels when her child is dead. In respect to religious issues, there are many facts that are not knowable by reason, such as many details of the resurrection. What is important is that there is nothing in Islam that contradicts reason. One must therefore distinguish between what lies beyond one's actual rational capacity and what conflicts with rational standards.

Thus, we should not depend for our acceptance of religious facts on finding a rational proof or justification for them, though they must be rationally possible. The Qur'an sometimes uses the expression of 'vision' and attributes it to the heart for some type of knowledge which is much higher than perception and rational knowledge. For example, on the ascension of the Prophet Muhammad to the heaven, the Qur'an says:

> The heart did not belie about what it saw. (53: 11)

Role of reason in understanding moral values

Now let us study in more detail the role of reason in understanding moral good and bad or what is right and wrong. This has been an important issue for all religious traditions, especially Judaism, Christianity and Islam. According to 'Divine Command Theory', 'good' or 'morally right' means 'Commanded by God', and 'bad' or 'morally wrong' means 'forbidden by God'.[11] On the other hand, there have also been some theologians who have argued for a rational approach to ethics. They believed that there are independent criteria of good and bad that can be understood by our reason. God's commands are not arbitrary and we can exercise rational methods to discover moral norms. Among Muslim theologians, the Ash'arites held the former view and the Shi'a and the Mu'tazilites held the latter.[12]

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[11] In this regard, George Hourani says: 'It (Ash'arite view, or what he calls 'theistic subjectivism', or what others have called 'ethical voluntarism') is not peculiar to Islam, since it occurs in medieval Judaism and occasionally in western thought; but it was probably more prominent and widespread in Islam than in any other civilization.' (1985, p. 57)

[12] Despite some differences in positions of the Shi'a and the Mu'tazilites, they are both called *ahl al-'adl* (the people of justice), because they both believe in independent moral values and in the existence of rational criteria for judging what is good and what is bad, and because a proper defence of the principle of divine justice depends on the belief in independent and rational good and evil.

According to the Ash'arites, all values are determined by the will of God and moral concepts such as 'good' and 'right' have no meaning other than 'that which God wills' or 'what is commanded by God'. These words have no objective meaning. According to the Shi'a and the Mu'tazilites, values such as justice and goodness have a real existence, independent of anyone's will, even God's. Values are objective.

Based on the above question, the other controversy concerns the question of whether good and evil are rational *(al-husn wa'l-qubd al-'aqliyyan)* or revealed. The Shi'a and the Mu'tazilites believed that good and evil are objective and therefore can be known rationally. Allamah Hilli, a great Shi'a scholar, in his comments on *Al-Yaqut* by al-Nawbakhti writes:

> The principle, on which the problems concerning justice depend is that God is the Wise, He never does an evil action and He never fails to perform any necessary *(wajib)* action. When this principle is proved questions concerning justice, such as goodness of obligation *(taklif)*, necessity of Grace *(lutf)* and the like are constructed upon. And since this principle depends on knowing good and evil and their rationality, the author started his discussion with these. (*Anwar al-Malakut fi Sharh al-Yaqut*, p. 104)

Elsewhere he writes:

> Imamites and their followers, the Mu'tazilites, believe that goodness and badness of some actions are known by reason evidently such as our knowledge of goodness of the benefit telling the truth and the badness of harmful lies, on which no reasonable person has doubt, and his certainty about this is not weaker than his certainty about the need of a contingent being [in its existence] to a cause or about the equality of two things which are each equal to a third thing. They believe that there are some actions, the understanding of whose goodness or badness needs reflection, such as the goodness of harmful truth telling and the badness of beneficial lies, and finally that there are some actions, on which reason is unable to make judgement and their goodness and badness is to be expressed by the religious law, *Shar'*, such as [how to perform] worship. (*Nahj al-Haqq wa Kashf al-Sidq*, p. 82)

On the other hand, there are the Ash'arites who deny rationality of goodness and badness. Shahrestani in his *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal* describes the idea of Ash'arites as follows:

> All obligations are to be learnt from the scriptures. Reason *(al-'aql)* does not make anything obligatory and does not make anything deserve to be considered as good or bad. Thus, knowing God becomes possible by reason and becomes obligatory *(wajib)* by the scripture *(sam')*. God, the most High, says: 'We have never chastised unless we have despatched some messenger.' (Qur'an, 17: 15) Similarly, gratitude to the blessing-giver, rewarding the obedient and punishing the disobedient all become obligatory *(wajib)* by the revealed, and not reason. (Vol. 1, p. 115)

In contrast, the Shi'a and the Mu'tazilites have argued that if goodness and badness were just religious and not understandable by reason, unbelievers would not recognise them today or before they knew of revelations, e.g. the Qur'an. But we know that there are many common values and moral principles among both theists and atheists. 'Abd al-Jabbar, a great Mu'tazilite theologian, says: 'any sane person knows his obligations even though he does not know that there is a commander and forbidder' (*Al-Mughni*, Vol. 1, p. 45).

The Qur'an in fact implies in many statements that knowledge of what is obligatory, good, and evil is accessible to everyone, 'Surely God bids to justice and good-doing and giving to kinsmen, and He forbids indecency, dishonour and insolence.' (16: 92) These virtues and vices must have been understood as such prior to revelation. The objectivity of ethical value is asserted or implied all through the Qur'an. For instance, the repeated commands of God to do what is right would be empty of force and spirit if they meant only 'commands to do what He commands.' It is even harder to make sense of the statement that God is always just to His servants on the supposition that 'just' means 'commanded by God'.

None of this means, of course, that humans are not in need of religious guidance. The argument is rather that in order to benefit fully from religious guidance, humans have been endowed with reason, and it is only when they are thoughtful and rational that they can comprehend revelation. The truth of religion and the principles of morality are understood by reason, but there is much more to be learnt from revelation.

According to Shi'a thinkers, religion can provide us with a fuller and more comprehensive account of morality, and moreover motivates us to observe moral requirements.

Faith and reason

Before we study the relation between faith and reason we need to know more about the nature of faith.

The nature of faith

Faith is a voluntary act of human kind, although some degrees of faith may require special grace and guidance of God. Man needs to try to be faithful and make preparations for faith. One reason for holding faith as a human act is that according to the Qur'an the people are held responsible or accountable for being faithful or non-faithful. People, on occasions, are blamed in the Qur'an for their failure in becoming faithful and this shows that it is because of their own decision. The other reason is that in the Qur'an or hadiths people are encouraged to have faith by referring to its good outcomes. The other reason is that faith may decrease or increase depending on human practices and characters. Imam 'Ali (AS), the first Shi'ite Imam, says: 'Do not be jealous because jealousy eats away faith just as fire eats away dried wood.'[13]

Among philosophers of religion, there are two main views about the nature of faith: the propositional view which takes faith as 'belief that' (*fides*) and the non-propositional which takes faith as 'belief in' *(fidusia)*. Of course, each may imply the other secondarily and in practice a faithful person is the one who both believes that God exists and trusts Him. However, the question is which one primarily constitutes the faith.

Reflecting on relevant verses of the Glorious Qur'an, normally the assumption among philosophers of religion is that in Islam faith has a propositional nature. For example, we read:

> '... the believers; they all believe in Allah and His angels and His

[13] Imam 'Ali, *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Sermons, no. 86.

> books and His apostles; we make no difference between any of his apostles; and they say: we hear and obey, our Lord.'[14]
> '...The believers are only those who believe in Allah and His Apostle then they doubt not.'[15]

I think faith means acceptance of or submission to certain truths and involves three elements, but it is not identical with any of them:

(a) A heartfelt knowledge. This knowledge is propositional. No one can be faithful while he is in doubt. It should be noted that according to the Glorious Qur'an, faith is different from knowledge, because sometimes a person may have knowledge in its most certain form, but lack faith. Sometimes people know some truths, but deny them unjustly or arrogantly.[16] The knowledge, thus, prepares the ground for faith, and faith needs knowledge; but it is not knowledge.

(b) A verbal declaration of that heartfelt knowledge.

(c) Acting in accord with that knowledge. The believer in his life must work in harmony with that knowledge he has, otherwise there would be no benefit in that knowledge. When Imam 'Ali (AS) was asked about belief, he said: 'Faith involves appreciation with heart, acknowledgement with tongue and actions with limbs.'[17]

Thus, faith is a voluntary act which pre-requires knowledge and should imply declaration with tongue and practice with limbs. Faith is a reality that might decrease or increase. Taking into account all the above aspects of faith and based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah, I believe that faith consists in submission to certain truths, such as existence of God (God exists).[18] Therefore, faith is neither 'belief that' nor 'belief in'. One may believe that something is true and at the same time deny or reject it. Among those who believe in basic religious truths and commit themselves to those truths,

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[14] Qur'an, 2. 285.
[15] Qur'an, 49. 15.
[16] Qur'an, 27. 14.
[17] Imam 'Ali, *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Sayings, no. 227.
[18] According to the Glorious Qur'an, the objects of faith include: God (2: 62) and His attributes (67: 29); the day of Judgment (2: 62); God's Apostles and His revelations to the apostles (2: 285; 3: 53); God's Angels (2: 285) and the invisible world (2: 3).

some people may be prepared to commit and submit themselves just in the declaration of faith, some may be prepared to fully or partly practise their faith and some may be prepared to submit their entire reality including acts, heart and mind to God. Faith may also have degrees according to different degrees of the pre-required knowledge or different degrees of the consequent acts.

Faith requires reason

As we saw above, reason comes before faith, and proves the existence of God and His attributes, like His omnipotence, omniscience, goodness and charity etc. For this purpose, there are many intellectual discussions in Shi'ite theological books and, indeed, one part of Islamic theology is called 'intellectual *kalam*'. Imam Sadiq referred to faith as a soldier of reason or its minister.[19] And in another narration, he said: 'with reason, worshippers know their Creator, and know that they are creations of Him and He is their Lord ... and with reason the worshippers separate good and evil acting and ...'[20]

Faith, however, is more than knowledge; reason, by securing required knowledge, just prepares the ground for faith. In the end it is the individual himself that decides whether to commit himself or not. A person becomes faithful and a believer only when he has respect and love for certain facts, i.e. articles of faith. Once the Prophet Muhammad asked his companions of 'the firmest handhold of faith'. They suggested different things like prayer and hajj. When they could not give the appropriate answer the Prophet said:

> 'The firmest handhold of faith is to love for the sake of God and to dislike for the sake of God, to befriend God's friends and to renounce His enemies.'[21]

The same idea is emphasised by Imams of the Household of the Prophet. For example, in reply to the question whether love and dislike derive from faith, Imam Sadiq said: 'Is faith anything but love

[19] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, the Book of Reason and Ignorance, no. 14.

[20] *Ibid.*, no. 34.

[21] *Ibid.*, the Book of Faith and Disbelief, 'Bab al-hubb fi Allah wa al-bughd fi Allah', No. 6, p. 126.

and dislike?'[22] It is also narrated that Imam Baqir said: 'The faith is love and love is the faith.'[23]

Faith supports and strengthens reason

With disbelief, reason loses its power and sharpness and may fail to discover or acknowledge even trivial facts. Unbelievers are like those who walk in darkness and do not know which path they have taken:

> 'God is the guardian of those who believe. He brings them out of the darkness into the light; and (as to) those who disbelieve, their guardians are Satans who take them out of light into the darkness ...' [24]

That is to say, they do not know about their world and their purpose of life. They have no insight about reality. In Islamic thinking, two kinds of guidance must be distinguished: primary or inclusive guidance and secondary or exclusive guidance. The former is for all humans, with which mankind potentially might acquire and obtain some initial knowledge about the world and its creator and the need for prophecy and religion. The latter is only for believers. The Qur'an says:

> 'Surely (as for) those who believe and do well, their Lord will guide them by their faith.' (10: 9)
> 'Yet He increases guidance for those who consent to be guided and grants them their piety.' (47: 17)[25]

Reason after faith is different from reason before faith. Faith helps reason to have complete function. Faith without reason is blind and reason without faith is crippled and barren. Faith opens for reason realms other than worldly life and reason makes grounds for true belief and faith.

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[22] *Ibid.*, No. 5, p. 125.

[23] Al-Majlisi, 1985, *Bihar al-Anuar*, Kitab al-iman wa al-kufr, Bab al-hubb fi Allah wa al-bughd fi Allah, lxvi, p. 238.

[24] *Qur'an*, 2: 257.

[25] See also the verses: 8: 29 & 20: 123.

Authority

In Islam, everything originates from God. Islam also emphasises that, 'There is no authority except for God and whoever is appointed by God.' In what follows, I will try to refer to the principles, on which the Islamic view on authority is based.

Principle One: Obedience belongs only to God

God is the only One that we have to obey. Independent from Him, nobody can ask for obedience. He has created us free. Why should anyone obey men like Nimrod or Abu Sufyan or the arrogant people of his time? God has created us free so that nobody can ask us to obey him.

Principle Two: Human freedom

We are free. This is philosophically true because no one has complete control over our decision or acts by himself. This is also morally and politically true because no one other than God has authority over us and therefore needs to be served or obeyed. In a well known hadith, Imam 'Ali says:

> 'Do not be a servant of other people. God has created you free.'
> (*Najh al-Balaghah*, Letter 31)

Principle Three: Delegation of obedience

God, due to some benefits for us, may ask us to obey some people or groups of people, e.g. our parents. We obey our parents because God has asked us to obey them.[26] As a result, if they want us to disobey God then we would not obey them. The general rule (without exception) is: *There is no obedience to any creature in the disobedience of the Creator.* Thus, when obeying the legitimate leader one first of all obeys God and then the position of leadership and not the person *per se*. Even the person who is

[26] Obedience here does not mean inferiority. Even the Prophets had to obey their parents.

leader, he himself must respect the position of leadership and act according to his own commands as a leader.

Principle Four: Authority of the Prophet

As we saw above, the authority or the right to be obeyed originally belongs to God, but God Himself may have given this authority in a limited or unlimited way to others. Above all, the Prophets were given this authority. Among the Prophets, some had more authorities including the authority to rule. The Holy Qur'an is very clear in this regard and we can find many verses about the Prophets who have had this position, e.g. the Prophet Abraham and the Prophet David.

The Prophet Muhammad was not just asked by God to recite and teach the Holy Qur'an; he was also asked to rule, that is, to implement the Qur'anic rulings in the socio-political life of the nation. The following verses indicate the necessity of obedience to the Holy Prophet:

> 'O you who believe! Obey God and obey the Apostle and those in authority from among you!' (4: 59)
> 'The Prophet has a greater claim on the faithful than they have on themselves.' (33: 6)[27]

To have a better idea, we should note that there were three areas in which the Prophet exercised his authority.

First: Delivering the divine Message

For delivering the Message, the Prophet was answerable to God. Teaching Islam and delivering the Message involved reciting the Holy Qur'an to the people, teaching them the Holy Qur'an, teaching them moral values, and exemplifying in his life those values.

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[27] See also the verses: 5: 55 and 59: 7.

Second: Judgement

One of the roles of the Prophet Muhammad was to judge among the People. The Qur'an says:

> 'Surely We have revealed the Book to you with the truth that you may judge between people by means of that which God has taught you.' (4: 105)

To judge is only for God, the Holy Prophet and those who are given authority by God. The Qur'an says:

> 'O David! Surely We have made you a ruler in the land; so judge between men with justice ...' (38: 26)

Therefore, if a judge is appointed by an unjust ruler, he has no authority to force people to abide by his judgement. It is a principle of Shi'i *fiqh* (jurisprudence) that the judge must be appointed by a just ruler who in turn gets his authority from God.

Third: Rule

The Prophet as reinforced by himself at Ghadir al-Khum, had the position of *wilayah*, that is, the authority to rule and the people needed to obey him. The Prophet asked the crowd:

> 'Do I not have a greater right on your souls than you yourselves have on them?'

They answered with one voice:

> 'The Apostle of God has a greater right on our souls than we ourselves have on them'.

The Prophet has more authority on the believers than what they have on themselves. Why? This is because God who primarily has this authority has delegated it to the Holy Prophet.

Principle Five: Delegation of the Prophet's authority to Imam 'Ali and successive Imams

In the same event, the Prophet was asked by God to transfer this same authority to Imam 'Ali. He was commanded to tell the people that which if he did not tell, was as though he had not delivered the entire message (see Shi'a commentaries of the Qur'an on the verse 5: 67).

> 'All those men and women who acknowledge me as their Master, I want them to acknowledge (at this point he held Imam 'Ali's hand and lifted it high over his head) 'Ali also as their Master. 'Ali is the Master of all those men and women whose Master I am.'

This indicates the point of delegation of the Holy Prophet's authority to Imam 'Ali by divine command.[28] As soon as this announcement was made, the verse was revealed:

> 'This day I have perfected for you, your religion and have completed My favour upon you, and have *chosen* for you Islam to be your religion.' (5: 3)

We also read in the Qur'an:

> 'Only God is your Guardian and His Apostle and those who believe. Who perform prayer and pay alms while they bow.'[29] (5: 55)

The Shi'a believe that the following Imams continued the same roles in presenting Islam (preaching), judging and leading the society. The difference was that there was no further revelation after the demise of the Prophet; all knowledge of the Imams was received from the Holy Prophet.

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[28] For a comprehensive list of non-Shi'a sources of this hadith, see numerous volumes of *'Abaqat al-Anwar* by Mir Hamid Husayn al-Hindi (d. 1306 AH) and *Al-Ghadir* by 'Abd al-Husayn al-Amili (d. 1390 AH).

[29] For more information about this verse and some debates that have arisen by the verse among Shi'a and Sunni scholars refer to: Sharafud-Din, Abdul Husayn, *Al-Muraja'at*, translated from Arabic to English by Yasin T al-Jibouri, entitled *The Right Path* ..., World Ahlul-bayt Islamic League (WABIL), pp. 173-180.

Principle Six: Delegation of the authority of Imams to the fuqaha'

During the time of the occultation of the Imam Mahdi, in which they have no direct access to the Imam, the Shi'a *fuqaha'* (jurists) inherit the authority which was originally given by God to the Prophet and then to the Imams. In what follows, I will first study the concept of *faqih* and then refer to the extent of the authority that a Shi'a *faqih* has. Of course, a proper discussion of the topic needs a thorough discussion about the institution of *marji'iyya* and that of *wilayat al-faqih* (mandate of the jurist), including their requirements and responsibilities.

Who is a faqih*?*

A *faqih* or *mujtahid* or Ayatollah is the one who has the quality of *ijtihad*. Technically, *ijtihad* means 'the process of deriving religious rulings from their religious sources'. For example, it is the role of such person to discover Islamic view on banking or politics or international relations. Of course, the procedure is very sophisticated.[30] Sometimes for one single *fatwa* (edict) to be issued, *ijtihad* might involve weeks of enquiry and investigation of religious sources. Obviously *ijtihad* must be based on revelation and reason.[31]

The role of faqih *in the time of minor occultation*

The period of the presence of the Imams ended in the year 260 AH, in which Imam 'Askari was martyred. This period is called *'asr al-zuhur* (the age of the presence), in contrast to *'asr al-ghaybah* (the age of the occultation).

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[30] *Ijtihad* is a very demanding qualification and involves deep knowledge of several disciplines and mastering several skills. Nowadays it usually takes around twenty years or even more of hard study to become a well-established *mujtahid*. However, the time taken is somewhat dependant on one's talents. Thus, it becomes clear that in the Shi'i thought respect for and obedience to the *faqih* is respect for and obedience to knowledge and piety that qualify someone to have such a position and not to the person as such. The Shi'a follow the most knowledgeable and the most pious jurist, since he is the person who would be most likely to represent the views of the Prophet and the Imams.

[31] The methodology of understanding religious rulings from the sources is well studied in the science of the principles of jurisprudence *(usul al-fiqh)*. See e.g. M A Shomali, *Principles of Jurisprudence: an Introduction to Methodology of Fiqh*, Qum, 2006.

In the time of the presence of the Imams, the role of Shi'a jurists was not very complicated since most of the time there was more or less the possibility of referring to the Imams personally and asking them for guidance.[32] Of course this was not always easy and free from risks. Therefore, during the time of the Imams, they trained a group of the companions to start *ijtihad*, to start deriving specific rules from general rules. In a clear and very well known hadith (narration), Imam Sadiq said to one of his companions:

> 'Our task is to give you the principles and your task is to derive the implications.'[33]

There are also cases in which the Imams have asked some of their companions, e.g. Aban ibn Taghlib, to issue *fatwa* for the Muslims.[34]

After the martyrdom of Imam 'Askari, the Shi'a started to experience a new age in which they could not visit their Imam (i.e. the 12th Imam)—the period of the minor occultation. Therefore, the Imam personally appointed four individuals (one after the other) to act as representatives for himself to the Shi'a community. These deputies of the Imam were called the *nuwwab al-arbi'ah* (the Four Deputies) including 'Uthman ibn Sa'id, (his son) Muhammad ibn 'Uthman, Husayn ibn Ruh and 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Saymuri respectively. When the Shi'a had questions for the Imam they referred to these deputies who then acted as a means of communication between the Shi'a and Imam Mahdi.

One reason for having this state was to prepare the Shi'a for the next age, which is known as *ghaybat al-kubra* (the major occultation). Before 'Ali ibn Muhammad died, Imam Mahdi gave him a message. This message was a condolence to the Shi'a for losing him (in advance) as he was the last means of communication to the Imam and a command to 'Ali ibn Muhammad not to introduce anyone as the deputy after himself. So with the passing away of 'Ali ibn Muhammad, the major occultation started. In this period no particular person was appointed as deputy and the age of generally appointed deputies *(al-na'ib al-'amm)* started.

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[32] We say most of the time because during this period it was not always possible to refer to the Imams (AS), especially when they were under house arrest, e.g. the 10th and 11th Imams (AS), and the Shi'a had no easy access to them. Or sometimes the Shi'a were living in some cities far away.

[33] Sayyid Muhsin Al-Amin, *A'yan al-Shi'a*, vol. 1, p. 387. A similar hadith is narrated from Imam Rida, *ibid.*

[34] For example, see al-Ardabili, *Jami' al-Ruwat*, vol. 1, p. 9.

The scope of the authority or deputyship of the *faqih* is one of the most essential elements of the Shi'a political doctrine. In what follows I will try to briefly point out the main areas of this authority.

Authority in presenting Islamic rulings and issuing *fatwa:* The *faqih* is the one who has the authority in presenting Islamic views on practical issues including moral and legal ones, e.g. abortion, euthanasia, banking, insurance and marriage. In respect to the beliefs, everyone is responsible to investigate and enquire about the principles of the faith by himself and cannot rely on anyone. Of course, having proved the truth of the religion for himself, one can refer in details to the experts. Expertise needed for doctrinal issues include great knowledge of both intellectual and revealed theology and it is obvious that to be able to understand the revealed theology one needs to master the methodology of understanding the Qur'an and the Sunnah which is provided in *fiqh* and its principles.

It has to be noted that the *faqih* or any other scholar has no authority to legislate or alter the laws. His role is just to do his best to understand the religious position by scholarly consulting the scriptures and reason.

This is unanimously accepted.

Authority in judging: This is also unanimously accepted.

Authority in administering *hisbah* affairs: It is unanimously accepted that the *faqih* is responsible for administering *hisbah* affairs i.e. those things that we know for sure the Legislator is not pleased with them being ignored or left, even though they are not as such obligatory. For example, if there is an orphan who possesses some money but has no guardian to look after his money in his best interest, all Shi'a *faqihs* say that this is the responsibility of the just *faqih* to undertake such a task. Or if there are properties whose owners are unknown, it would be again the responsibility of the *faqih* to protect them from being wasted. Any social affair with whose negligence the legislator is not pleased, thus, must be undertaken and supervised by the just *faqih*.

Authority in ruling the society: As we saw above, there is no doubt among the Shi'a scholars that the *faqih* has responsibility and authority for getting somehow involved in socio-political spheres. Islam is to bring happiness by offering a comprehensive plan of life and it is the job of the

faqih to understand, present and implement this plan. No one can remain indifferent in respect to what happens in society and knowledgeable people have greater responsibility.

Unlike some *faqihs* who had the idea that the authority of the *faqih* in socio-political affairs is limited to *hisbah* affairs, some have had the idea that the *faqih* has all the power needed to rule society. The Ayatollah Khomeini says:

> 'By authority we mean governance, the administration of the country and the implementation of the sacred laws of the Shari'ah. This constitutes a serious and difficult duty but does not earn anyone an extraordinary status or raise him above the level of common humanity. In other words, authority here has the meaning of a government, administration and execution of law. Contrary to what many people believe, it is not a privilege but a grave responsibility.'[35]

This is echoed in the constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran as follows:

> 'The powers of government in the Islamic Republic of Iran are vested in the legislature, the judiciary, and the executive powers, functioning under the supervision of the absolute religious leader and the leadership of the Ummah.' (Article 57)

Thus, it becomes clear that in Shi'i Islam the authority primarily belongs to God and then to the people with whom God is pleased. After the Prophets and Imams just *faqihs* are granted such authority. The main requirement for having such authority is justice and deep acquaintance with the religious sources, i.e. the Qur'an, the Sunnah and reason. Reason is one source and at the same time reason helps us to define the proper method for understanding the first two (the Qur'an and Sunnah). Once more it becomes clear how important reason, justice and piety for Shi'i Islam are.

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[35] Ayatollah Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution*, pp. 62-62.

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FAITH AND REASON IN THE CATHOLIC TRADITION

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One of my students in political philosophy has raised major questions about democracy in discussion with me. This student is Muslim, from Pakistan. His main concern is that majority voting cannot be a means for determining the truth, or for establishing what is the right way to behave. The majority decision, simply because it reflects the view of a majority in some context, cannot be presumed to enjoy some special moral status. My first reaction, both as a teacher of political philosophy and as a citizen of a republic, is to point out that he doesn't understand what democracy is. This is a misconception of the point of democracy. So I begin to suggest what he might read in order to discover what democracy claims for itself.

Recently, for another purpose, I was re-reading the two encyclicals of Pope John Paul II concerned with moral philosophy and the capacities of human reason, namely, *Veritatis splendor* (1993)[1] and *Fides et ratio* (1998),[2] and I found the Pope warning about the very thing that my student had been warning me about: the idea that democracy could be seen by some as a way of finding out what is right or true. Finding him in such good company, I was obliged to admit that my student's concerns might not be as misguided or trivially mistaken as I first thought.

In his letter on faith and reason *(Fides et ratio)* the Pope draws attention to the loss of confidence in human reason. This is a tendency associated with post-modernism but it is not confined to such cultures. The emphasis on a negative hermeneutic in the intellectual heritage of modernity contributes to a culture of suspicion and doubt whenever people attempt to rely on claimed knowledge (Nietzsche, Marx, Freud).

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[1] Published by the Catholic Truth Society, London, 1993. Referred to in the text as VS with paragraph numbers.

[2] Published by Libreria Editice Vaticana, Vatican City, 1998. Referred to in the text as FR with paragraph numbers.

The loss of trust in reason also has its political implications. When discussing pragmatism, for instance, the Pope warns against the abandonment of democracy's moral foundations. He observes a 'growing support for a concept of democracy which is not grounded upon any reference to unchanging values: whether or not a line of action is admissible is decided by the vote of a parliamentary majority' (FR 89). Here is the point which had also caught my student's attention. They are not warning about the theories printed in the textbooks or classics of political philosophy, but about the way in which people actually form their views and make their decisions in daily life.

In my presentation I will address the question of the relationship of faith and reason in the Catholic tradition, but particularly in relation to politics. This is only one of many possible approaches to the faith and reason pair. Other approaches might look at the role of reason in the act of faith, or at the dimensions of sin and grace in the functioning of human reason. The letters of Pope John Paul II take up a longstanding tradition of Catholic thought in considering human reason as a domain of divine revelation, through which important elements of God's will for humankind can be discovered. In that tradition, revelation is spoken of analogously, so that the human creature's recognition of the order willed by the Creator is the acceptance of a revelation. In other words, revelation is not correlated only with faith, but also with reason. This is particularly important where Catholic Christians are challenged to find a basis for moral, social and political co-operation with those who do not share their faith. Human reason continues to be a common basis for dialogue and collaboration, and from the Catholic's perspective it is one which can provide reliable guidance for living and acting. It is the contemporary denial of reason's capacities which provoked the Pope to write in defence of human reason, and so I take his reflections as my starting-point for this discussion of the relationship of faith and reason in the Catholic tradition. My presentation is structured as follows:

1. Analysis of the problem
   a. Elements of the problem: pluralism, relativism, scepticism, pragmatism
   b. Denial of any universal truths about human persons, or nature
   c. Undermining of foundations for democratic political order, and consequently denial of foundations for human rights in

the dignity of the human person
2. The solution: appeal to human reason
3. Role of Church and Revelation
a. Catholic Church respectful of autonomy of political, within limits
b. The Church does not expect its vision to be enforced with the power of the state
4. Implications for politics: Aquinas on the natural law as subversive
5. Conclusion

1 Analysis of the problem

1a Elements of the problem: pluralism, relativism, scepticism, pragmatism

The pursuit of an illusory freedom unconnected with truth is the target of the encyclical, *Veritatis splendor* (1993), which is addressed to Bishops, exhorting them to be constant in teaching moral truth as part of their work of evangelisation (VS 1). The Pope compares the search for knowledge in all fields with the search for the meaning of life. While the former thrives, the latter is neglected. 'The development of science and technology, this splendid testimony of the human capacity for understanding and for perseverance, does not free humanity from the obligation to ask the ultimate religious questions' (VS 1).

With these remarks the Pope refers back to the hope of the Second Vatican Council in its document *Gaudium et spes* of engaging in dialogue with contemporaries and their cultures.[3] 'In response to the encouragement of the Second Vatican Council (ref. GS 40 & 43), there has been a desire to foster dialogue with modern culture, emphasizing the rational—and thus universally understandable and communicable—character of moral norms belonging to the sphere of the natural moral law' (VS 36). Explorations of human autonomy and freedom also conducted by Catholic moral theologians are thought to have contributed to this

[3] *Gaudium et spes* was adopted by the assembled Bishops of the Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council in Rome, 1965, as 'The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the World of Today'. It offered a new approach to the Church's understanding of its relationship to the secular, and to the domains of culture, politics, economy and society. I am using the translation by William Purdy, published by the Catholic Truth Society, London 1966. Referred to in the text as GS with paragraph number.

dialogue. 'This kind of investigation is legitimate and necessary, since the moral order, as established by the natural law, is in principle accessible to human reason. Furthermore, such investigation is well-suited to meeting the demands of dialogue and co-operation with non-Catholics and non-believers, especially in pluralist societies' (VS 74).

The Church finds it difficult to engage with partners in dialogue about the ultimate questions because of 'particular ways of looking at man, society and the world' (VS 98). In offering a service to truth in affirming universal and unchanging moral norms the Church hopes to be of service to every person and to the whole of humanity, since the norms it teaches have legal and political implications.[4] The contemporary disregard for reason's potential to answer the ultimate questions is reinforced by theoretical accounts which do not simply challenge the content of the Church's teaching, but undermine the possibility of the engagement in dialogue of Church and partner in the world. In particular the Pope is concerned about these theories as they infect moral theology and undermine the Church's message from within. 'Today's widespread tendencies towards subjectivism, utilitarianism and relativism appear not merely as pragmatic attitudes or patterns of behaviour, but rather as approaches having a basis in theory and claiming full cultural and social legitimacy' (VS 106).

The encyclical speaks of a 'crisis of truth' insofar as the exaltation of freedom and the affirmation of the dignity of conscience has been coupled with a disregard for the criteria of good and evil. '... (T)here is a tendency to grant to the individual conscience the prerogative of independently determining the criteria of good and evil and then acting accordingly. Such an outlook is quite congenial to an individualist ethic, wherein each individual is faced with his own truth, different from the truth of others. Taken to its extreme consequences, this individualism leads to a denial of the very idea of human nature' (VS 32). And so also it would include a denial of the point of dialogue. The Pope also points out how this tendency must ultimately undermine acceptance of universal

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[4] These norms ... 'represent the unshakeable foundation and solid guarantee of a just and peaceful human coexistence, and hence of genuine democracy, which can come into being and develop only on the basis of the equality of all its members, who possess common rights and duties. *When it is a matter of the moral norms prohibiting intrinsic evil, there are no privileges or exceptions for anyone.* It makes no difference whether one is the master of the world or the "poorest of the poor" on the face of the earth. Before the demands of morality we are all absolutely equal' (VS 96).

moral truths, such as could ground human rights, or provide foundation for a genuine democracy (VS 96; 101).

Five years after *Veritatis splendor* John Paul II published another encyclical letter, dealing with some of the same concerns. Like the earlier letter, *Fides et ratio* was addressed to the bishops of the Church. It has the extraordinary objective of reinforcing confidence in human reason, of countering the tendencies to distrust of reason and to scepticism. Extraordinary, because while one might expect the Bishop of Rome to be concerned primarily about the neglect of faith, the Pope is in fact rushing to the defence of human reason, which he finds under threat in contemporary intellectual trends. This letter bemoans the fact that contemporary trends in philosophy and in post-modern culture militate against any raising of ultimate questions about the nature of the human, and its destiny, the nature of reality (being), and of truth itself. Seeing the mission of the Church as *diakonia* of the truth, service of humankind through engagement together in the search, the Pope attempts to secure the cultural and intellectual conditions which would make that dialogue possible. The opening paragraphs (FR 2) refer to *Gaudium et spes* 16 and the joint search: 'Conscience unites Christians with other men (and women) in the search for truth, for solutions of individual and social problems of morality which shall be based on truth.' Well, the anxiety now reflected in these later letters is that Christians won't find dialogue partners who are interested in truth.

The Pope undertakes to reflect on human reason '... because, at the present time in particular, the search for ultimate truth seems often to be neglected.' A lot has been achieved in various disciplines, but the Pope comments, 'the positive results achieved must not obscure the fact that reason, in its one-sided concern to investigate human subjectivity, seems to have forgotten that men and women are always called to direct their steps towards a truth which transcends them. Sundered from that truth, individuals are at the mercy of caprice, and their state as person ends up being judged by pragmatic criteria based essentially upon experimental data, in the mistaken belief that technology must dominate all ... This has given rise to different forms of agnosticism and relativism which have led philosophical research to lose its way in the shifting sands of widespread scepticism' (FR 5). The lack of confidence in human reason's ability to attain truth is found to be reflected not only in scepticism, but also in forms of relativism (FR 80) and in an undifferentiated pluralism whereby it is assumed 'that all positions are equally valid' (FR 5; also 50, 69).

The Pope warns against strands in intellectual culture: eclecticism, historicism, scientism, pragmatism, nihilism (FR 86-90). In their different ways these positions undermine any pursuit of truth. Their mistake, from the Pope's perspective, is to distrust reason's capacities to achieve knowledge, or to limit and confine reason in what it may investigate.

1b Denial of any universal truths about human persons, or nature

In *Veritatis splendor*, John Paul II reaffirms the possibility of speaking of certain acts as intrinsically evil. He turns to *Gaudium et spes* (GS 27) for an example of this style of traditional moral teaching:

> Whatever is hostile to life itself, such as any kind of homicide, genocide, abortion, euthanasia and voluntary suicide; whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, physical and mental torture and attempts to coerce the spirit; whatever is offensive to human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution and trafficking in women and children; degrading conditions of work which treat labourers as mere instruments of profit, and not as free responsible persons: all these and the like are a disgrace, and so long as they infect human civilization they contaminate those who inflict them more than those who suffer injustice, and they are a negation of the honour due to the Creator (VS 80).

He notes that this way of considering moral reality finds little resonance in contemporary life. Claims to knowledge of human nature and its dignity, and the proclamation of universal moral norms rooted in human dignity are met with scepticism. The Pope observes '... signs of a widespread distrust of universal and absolute statements, especially among those who think that truth is born of consensus and not of a consonance between intellect and objective reality' (FR 56). Later the Pope suggests that distrust of reason has led contemporary philosophy to abandon 'metaphysical study of the ultimate human questions in order to concentrate upon problems which are more detailed and restricted, at times even purely formal' (FR 61). The Pope, as a former teacher of

philosophy, expresses regret at the related restriction of the philosophical enterprise. 'From universal wisdom and learning, it has been gradually reduced to one of the many fields of human knowing; indeed in some ways it has been consigned to a wholly marginal role. Other forms of rationality have acquired an ever higher profile, making philosophical learning appear all the more peripheral. These forms of rationality are directed not towards the contemplation of truth and the search for the ultimate goal and meaning of life; but instead, as "instrumental reason", they are directed—actually or potentially—towards the promotion of utilitarian ends, towards enjoyment or power' (FR 47).

1c Undermining of foundations for democratic political order and for human rights

The Pope's concern also has its political implications. When discussing pragmatism he warns against the abandonment of moral foundations for democracy. He observes a 'growing support for a concept of democracy which is not grounded upon any reference to unchanging values: whether or not a line of action is admissible is decided by the vote of a parliamentary majority' (FR 89). The anxiety is that without a solid moral foundation for human rights which are constraints on what governments may do to people, the formulation of human rights may become malleable to the influence of the politically powerful. Reflection on the dignity of the human person could provide that moral foundation, but any rejection of the capacity of human reason to come to conclusions about human dignity ultimately undermines the moral basis of democracy.

2 The solution: appeal to human reason

The Pope's appeal to human reason is also expressed in terms of natural law. Since the Pope is addressing his brother bishops in the Catholic Church he does not have to explain at any length what is meant by such notions. While they might be rejected as incomprehensible in a purely secular context, the understanding of human reason as exhibiting a law of human nature is part of the Catholic intellectual heritage. The Pope can rely on the bishops' acceptance that law is not separate from reason, but is a

reasonable ordering of a collective for a good purpose. This understanding of law applies at all levels, whether speaking of the divine law, human law or the natural law. In other words, human persons and communities can rely on their reason as a source of order. As a source of order, reason is not arbitrary, but exhibits its own intrinsic ordering in the desire to know what is true and to identify what it is good to do. The natural law 'is nothing other than the light of understanding infused in us by God, whereby we understand what must be done and what must be avoided. God gave this light and this law to man at creation' (VS 40).

Respect for fundamental human rights might be taken as an example of unchanging values which might ground democracy. With such philosophical foundations, the Church's vision of human dignity could make a contribution to the consolidation of democratic systems, and could continue as a partner in the profound dialogue. *Gaudium et spes* is mentioned as providing 'a virtual compendium of the biblical anthropology from which philosophy too can draw inspiration' (FR 60).

Veritatis splendor received a warm welcome from one contemporary moral philosopher, who has been a leading figure in the critique of the philosophical presuppositions of modernity, Alasdair MacIntyre.[5] MacIntyre's intellectual path has taken him from Marxism to a form of Aristotelianism and Thomism. Along that path, MacIntyre has confronted the assumption that a positivist secular world-view should set the terms of analysis and debate for the encounter between belief systems. He has discovered the importance of tradition for rooting the practice of philosophy, as of life itself, so that persons are formed in the qualities (virtues) which they require if they are to be able to identify their proper good and to pursue it effectively. In an article in *The Thomist* he welcomed and applauded the Pope's letter, from his position as a Catholic philosopher.[6]

> ... the encyclical not only spells out the philosophical commitments and presuppositions of Catholic Christianity, it also explains just why these commitments and presuppositions are going to be regarded as contestable, at what points their rejection is of the greatest significance, and what the intellectual and moral costs of such rejection are. It does so by presenting us

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[5] See his trilogy, *After Virtue* Notre Dame, Indiana, second edition 1984, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, London, 1988, and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, London, 1990.

[6] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'How can we learn what *Veritatis splendor* has to teach?' *The Thomist* 58 (1994), 171–95.

> with what is in effect a theology of moral philosophy embedded in a theology of the moral life (188f.).

MacIntyre stresses moral philosophy as embedded in a moral life. The embeddedness of a philosophy in a lived practice is important in MacIntyre's account of morality, and so he applauds the Pope's recognition of the implications of intellectual error for living the Christian life. In other words, the errors are not merely intellectual, but are 'practical, moral errors ... that are peculiarly influential in our own particular culture' (190, referring to North America). He picks out three errors in particular. The view that pre-moral and pre-rational choices and preferences are fundamental to the person, so that moral standards are rejected if incoherent with those preferences, is a widespread distortion. A second tendency is to consider all moral situations as concerned with balancing and weighing benefits and costs. And the third is a relativism which is prepared to concede validity to moral principles and norms only as relative to certain persons or certain contexts. Each of these errors is challenged by the Pope's upholding of a moral law, rooted in the exigencies of human nature.

3 Role of Church and Revelation

3a Catholic Church respectful of the autonomy of the political

Human reason's own reflection on human dignity also provides the key to the understanding both of politics itself and of the relationship of the community of faith to the political community. The relationship between the Church and the political community is discussed in GS 76. The complexity of the this relationship is implicitly acknowledged in the treatment, but the elements of the complexity are spelt out in a series of steps. It is worth considering the statement at length.

> By virtue of her function and field of action the Church is quite distinct from the political community and uncommitted to any political system; she is at once the sign and the guarantee that human personality transcends the field of politics. The political community and the Church in their respective fields are independent and autonomous; but under different titles they are both helping the same men to fulfil their personal and social vocation. The more they co-operate reasonably, with an

> eye on the circumstances of time and place, the more effectively they will perform this service to everybody's advantage. Man is not confined to the temporal order: living in human history he keeps his eternal vocation intact. The Church, rooted in the Redeemer's love, helps to make justice and charity flourish more vigorously within nations and between nations. She preaches the gospel truth and brings the light of her teaching to bear on every province of human affairs with the witness of her faithful. Thus she respects and promotes political liberty and responsibility (GS 76).

First there is the assertion of difference, rooted in the fact that the Church 'is at once the sign and the guarantee that human personality transcends the field of politics'. Second is the assertion of mutual independence and autonomy. The Church does not only claim an autonomy for itself but acknowledges also an appropriate autonomy of the political. Third, the possibility of cooperation is given by the fact that both political community (note, more than the state: state plus society) and Church have similar functions though different. Both are 'helping the same men to fulfil their personal and social vocation'. This analysis, like the document as a whole, is rooted in an account of the human, both individual and social. Any possible distinction between this worldly and other-worldly concerns is constrained by the fact that it is the same human reality which has both dimensions. Hence there is the potential for cooperation. 'Man is not confined to the temporal order: living in human history he keeps his eternal vocation intact' (GS 76).

3b The Church does not expect its vision to be enforced with the power of the state

The acknowledgment of the difference and the respective autonomies of the Church and civil authority entails that the Church not take to itself the role and powers proper to the civil authority, or the state. The Council affirms this implicitly in its stating that '...the Church uses temporal things so far as her mission requires. But her hope does not lie in the privileges offered by civil authority; indeed she will give up the exercise of lawfully acquired rights where she is satisfied that to continue to use them will call in question the sincerity of her witness, or where new circumstances of

life call for new arrangements' (GS 76). The commitment that the Church will not rely on the coercive power of the state in order to achieve its ends is more explicitly made in the Second Vatican Council's declaration on religious liberty, *Dignitatis humanae personae* which affirms the principle of religious freedom.[7] No one is to be coerced against his or her conscience. This is applicable also to moral matters. The Church declares that she does not intend to rely on the coercive power available to the state in order to implement her views of the human good and of moral order. So, she is accepting that there are conditions for involvement in the political community, and she agrees to abide by those conditions. In specifying that her mission and role is religious and not political, the Church affirms both that she is not tied to any particular political system, and that she does not seek to use the powers appropriate to political systems. 'The force which the Church can inject into present-day society consists simply of that faith and charity brought to bear on life. It does not consist of wielding some external power by merely human means' (GS 42).

In order to explore more precisely the implications of this understanding of the role of reason in relation to morality, law and politics, we return to earlier debates in the Church's history, in which the relationship between secular and ecclesial authority was being clarified. Thomas Aquinas was an important figure in that history and shaped the language in which the Church would subsequently consider the relationship of faith and reason.

4 Implications for politics: Aquinas on the natural law as subversive

Alasdair MacIntyre remarks that Aquinas was one of the educational failures of the University of Naples.[8] He was a failure, because he did not conform to that model of the graduate which the founder of the university, the emperor Frederick II, had hoped for, clerks and lawyers to

[7] 'Freedom of this kind means that all should be immune from coercion on the part of individuals, social group and every human power so that, within due limits, nobody is forced to act against his convictions nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his convictions in religious matters in private or in public, alone or in association with others.' Austin Flannery, OP, (ed.), *Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Dublin, 1975, p. 801.

[8] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Natural Law as Subversive: The Case of Aquinas' in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 26:1 (1996), pp. 61-83, at 73.

administer his empire. Instead of becoming an obedient and bureaucratic clerk, Aquinas turned out to be subversive in teaching a philosophy of law and politics which was directly critical of the stance adopted by the emperor. He was also critical of the policies of the saintly King Louis IX of France. These criticisms are to be found in Aquinas's writings in the *Summa theologiae* on law and the common good. The notion of Aquinas as subversive is perhaps surprising, but recent historical and exegetical work is revealing a complexity which gives the lie to the standard rendering of the doctrine of natural law. It shows that as in other areas of theology, Aquinas's presentation of his views on law was situated in a lively debate with real political implications. Later medieval debates were also occasioned by a particular crisis concerning the relationship between imperial and papal jurisdiction.

Aquinas distinguished between a limited good as the proper object of political order and the unrestricted common good as the ultimate object of human striving.[9] This is not the same as the Augustinian distinction between the two cities, which always left the political community in history in the position of compromising with evil. For Augustine, political power of its nature relied on coercion, and so was animated by the distorted human impulse to impose its will on others, *libido dominandi*. For Augustine, therefore, political power is inevitably sinful. Aquinas did not share this view, even though he adopted the strong sense of realism which Augustinian awareness of history brought to the idealism of Aristotle. For Aquinas, the good pursued in political life is a real good, and part of the great scale of goods which are reflected on in ethics. The challenge for that reflection is to identify the nature of the good pursued in politics, and to locate it in relation to other goods. The questions which arise require investigation into the relationship between temporal goods of justice and peace, and the unrestricted goods of beatitude. If that relationship is one of instrumentality, or subordination, does that imply obligation to apply the means appropriate to the inferior good so that they also bring about the higher good? In other words, should the political regime attempt to ensure that its people obey God and do his will?

Aquinas's distinction between different levels of good parallels his distinction between different types of law. In this context, the relevant

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[9] Finnis, J. 'Public Good: The Specifically Political Common Good in Aquinas' in *Natural Law and Moral Inquiry: Ethics Metaphysics and Politics in the Work of Germain Grisez*, edited by Robert P George, Washington, DC, 1998, pp. 174-209.

distinction is between divine and human law. His definition of law as an ordinance of reason directed to the common good, made by one who has responsibility for the community, and promulgated, leaves open the possibility that there are different goods in common for different communities. It also leaves open the possibility that the methods to be employed in the application of law are different.

> For human law's purpose is the temporal tranquillity of the state, a purpose which the law attains by coercively prohibiting external acts to the extent that those are evils which can disturb the state's peaceful condition. The purpose of divine law is to lead one to the end of eternal fulfilment, an end which is blocked by any sin, and not merely by external acts but also by interior ones. And so what suffices for the perfection of human law, viz., that it prohibit wrongdoing and impose punishments, does not suffice for the perfection of divine law; what that needs is that one be made completely ready for participation in eternal fulfilment.[10]

This text draws the distinction between the types of law in terms of their objects (temporal peace, eternal beatitude), and the kinds of compliance that they can expect (external performance, interior submission). Other texts draw the distinction in terms of the relationships and virtues to be fostered.

The requirement that the citizens be virtuous refers to the appropriate contribution that people can make as individuals, members of families and households and of other organizations to the political community. For such virtue, they must have internalised the relevant requirements and habits of behaviour. However, it remains the case that human law addresses the behaviour of people and is satisfied with outward conformity. This had been stressed in the context of the distinction between human and divine law, noted above. Individual persons themselves have the responsibility to lead their lives in such a way that they achieve their ultimate end. The contribution of the political community to that project is the maintenance of the public good of peace and justice, and the provision of that measure of security which will allow individuals and families to live well. So, as Finnis admits, the correct answer to the question 'Can a state's

[10] Aquinas, S.th. 1a2ae q98 a1c, adapted from Finnis's translation, 'Public Good' at p. 177 and p. 199.

common good, being the good of a complete community, be anything less than the complete good, the fulfilment of its citizens?' has to be both yes and no.[11] Insofar as families and religious communities are part of political community, their common good designated as the life of virtue is attainable in that community, on condition that everyone, including civil authorities, exercises his or her responsibilities appropriately. So the answer can be yes, admitting that the common good of a flourishing life can be attained in political community, but it requires that the civil authorities do not overstep their proper boundaries, and deprive households, families or religious groups of their autonomy in pursuing the life of virtue as they see fit. If they do remain with proper boundaries, then the public good which they pursue is a limited good, instrumental to the more ultimate goods which persons and households should pursue for themselves.[12]

Aquinas's views on the purpose of human law in relation to divine (moral) law are made explicit in his discussion of two questions, namely, whether human, civil law should command all the virtues, and whether it should prohibit all vices. When he asks if the purpose of human law is to prevent all wrongdoing he notes two things. The first is that it would probably be impossible to prevent all wrongdoing. The second remark is that the law forbids precisely those wrongful acts which undermine social order, and from which good people might be expected to abstain. He identifies those as actions which not only harm others, their direct victims, but which if they were permitted would make social existence impossible, such as theft and murder.[13] From this distinction we can see that Aquinas is aware that there will be wrongful deeds committed with which human lawmakers and enforcers will not concern themselves. But their attention is directed to those misdeeds which affect not only the quality but the very possibility of social life, since their concern is primarily for the public good. Two examples, obvious ones, are given, but it is clear that Thomas expected a longer list. Were theft or murder permissible, were perjury and

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[11] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

[12] Finnis sees in this clarification an anticipation in Aquinas's thought of the later, 20th century notion of subsidiarity. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

[13] 'Whether it belongs to the human law to repress all vices? ... Now human law is framed for a number of human beings, the majority of whom are not perfect in virtue. Wherefore, human laws do not forbid all vices, from which the virtuous abstain, but only the more grievous vices, from which it is possible for the majority to abstain; and chiefly those that are to the hurt of others, without the prohibition of which human society could not be maintained: thus human law prohibits murder, theft and suchlike.' S.th. 1a2ae q96 a2.

fraud to be tolerated, then we would be in precisely that state of war which Hobbes described: the war of each one against each one, since no one could trust another, and each must consider his neighbour with suspicion, 'and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.'[14]

The use of this distinction between two kinds of wrongdoing from the perspective of the human lawmaker is a good example of the realism which Aquinas brought to Aristotle on the basis of his Augustinian heritage. This nuanced stance is evident in his discussion of a typically Aristotelian topic, namely, whether it is the purpose of law to make people good.[15] With Aristotle he wants to answer yes, that the law is aimed at the quality of citizens, but with Augustine he qualifies what is meant by 'good' by distinguishing different respects in which people are considered good. It had been pointed out in one of the opinions cited by Aquinas in relation to this question that some people act well in relation to public affairs, whose private lives are not above reproach.[16] In his answer Aquinas does not deny the different degrees of virtue present among people, but he makes an interesting point about different expectations applicable to lawgivers and subjects of law:

> The goodness of any part is considered in comparison with the whole; ... Since then every man is a part of the state, it is impossible that a man be good unless he be well proportionate to the common good: nor can the whole be well consistent unless its parts be proportionate to it. Consequently, the common good of the state cannot flourish, unless the citizens be virtuous, at least those whose business it is to govern. But it is enough for the good of the community, that the other citizens be so far virtuous that they obey the commands of their ruler.[17]

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[14] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chap. 13.

[15] S.th. 1a2ae q92 a1. See Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III chap. 9, in which this is discussed. Concern with the quality of citizens is what distinguishes a polity or political community from a mere alliance for mutual protection, or a business deal for the exchange of goods and services.

[16] 'Law is ordained to the common good ... But some behave well in things regarding the community, who behave ill in things regarding themselves. Therefore it is not the business of the law to make men good' q92 a1 Obj 3.

[17] S.th. 1a2ae q92 a1 ad3m.

Alasdair MacIntyre has shown how these discussions are derived from real issues debated in the political world of the 13th century.[18] He situates them in the stances adopted by two very different monarchs, Louis IX of France, and the emperor, Frederick II in the Kingdom of Sicily. Louis IX understood his royal authority in theological terms, considering it his duty to enforce the moral and religious teachings of Scripture and the Church. He applied the law as an instrument of moral education. Laws promulgated by him in 1254 prohibited cursing and swearing, games of chance, gambling, and attempted to abolish various vices including usury and prostitution. Aquinas experienced this while in Paris. MacIntyre notes Aquinas's reasons for taking the position that human law should not repress all the vices. Aquinas's arguments, which have to do with effective law making, are directly opposed to those relied upon by King Louis IX. Where Louis appeals to Christian theological reasons, Aquinas argues from natural reason, generating standards which should apply to all rulers, whether Christian or not (67). In the context of his reflection on natural law, Aquinas holds that the promulgation of law by one with authority and power to make law is not sufficient to confer the status of law. Coherence with the natural law is required for reasonable citizens to accept that the promulgated law is binding on them. It is not necessary for valid human law that it be made by a Christian prince using Christian principles. It is necessary that it be reasonable, and recognisable as such by rational citizens, what MacIntyre calls plain persons (67 and texts).

Aquinas had also experienced the emperor Frederick's style of rule while a young student at the University of Naples. As MacIntyre notes, the Constitutions of Melfi, promulgated in 1231 for the Kingdom of Sicily to which Naples then belonged, attempted to repress vice but most importantly to extend the power of the centralized royal authority at the expense of local custom. 'Blasphemy, games of chance, adultery, prostitution, and the dispensing of love-potions were made punishable offences, and the keeping or frequenting of taverns were made grounds for exclusion from civic life ... Local custom was allowed the status of law only insofar as it had acquired royal, or rather imperial approval ...' (71). But as in the case of King Louis, Aquinas's difference with Frederick was related to his view of imperial lawmaking and the centralization of power. In those 1231 Constitutions the emperor claims a divine source

[18] MacIntyre, 'Natural Law as Subversive'. Page numbers in parentheses refer to this article.

for his authority, as the providential instrument to correct the weaknesses of fallen humankind. The emperor is seen as the only source of peace and justice, with his authority direct from God. This placed him in a position of independence *vis-à-vis* papal authority. Unlike Louis IX, who accepted the spiritual authority of the Church, Frederick understood his imperial position as giving him pre-eminence over the Church. Any questioning of his authority was interpreted as a rejection of divine authority. MacIntyre notes how this could not be acceptable to Aquinas on his understanding of law and its source. Aquinas in his *Summa*, affirmed that people have the ability to judge by the light of their own reason whether or not some law is just or unjust. This doctrine is precisely the kind of questioning of imperial authority which had been forbidden (72).

Over against both Louis IX and Frederick II, Aquinas's doctrine of natural law and the common good is radical and subversive. It is subversive in denying a source of political authority other than the reason of citizens, and in affirming the capacity of citizens to judge for themselves whether law is just or unjust. Where both of those monarchs relied on theological reasons to support their claims to authority, Aquinas countered with philosophical arguments. 'It is the rulers who speak as theologians, Aquinas who speaks as a philosopher' (73).

As a practical instance to illustrate the differences, MacIntyre takes the attitude of the law-makers to wandering minstrels. Both rulers saw these travelling entertainers as threats to social order, because of the ribald and subversive nature of their songs and plays, which were often directed against authority in all its forms. They attempted to outlaw them, and to prohibit attendance at their entertainments. The Pope had done likewise in his dominions. But Aquinas, who along with his fellow Dominicans in Paris had been a target of a mocking ballad and so might be supposed to have reason to support the law against balladeers, was prepared to see the positive contribution which such performers make to social life. He acknowledges a positive function for fun and games, including the entertainment provided by minstrels, and he recognises this as legitimate occupation (75).

5 Conclusion

The 20th century statements of Church teaching, both in the Vatican Council's *Gaudium et spes* and in the two encyclical letters of Pope John

Paul II, affirm the proper autonomy of created reality, of human reason and of human political affairs. At the same time, they consistently warn against a false understanding of this autonomy (VS 39). Central to the respect accorded to human reason is the recognition of reason's capacity to recognise the binding nature of the moral order which it can discern. From the faith perspective reason is seen as participating in divine wisdom; even if reason does not always recognise its origin, it retains that capacity to recognise the moral law.

> The teaching of the Council emphasizes, on the one hand, *the role of human reason* in discovering and applying the moral law: the moral life calls for that creativity and originality typical of the person, the source and cause of his own deliberate acts. On the other hand, reason draws its own truth and authority from the eternal law, which is none other than divine wisdom itself. At the heart of the moral life we thus find the principle of a 'rightful autonomy' of man, the personal subject of his actions. *The moral law has its origin in God and always finds its source in him:* at the same time, by virtue of natural reason, which derives from divine wisdom, it is *a properly human law.* Indeed, as we have seen, the natural law 'is nothing other than the light of understanding infused in us by God, whereby we understand what must be done and what must be avoided. God gave this light and this law to man at creation'. The rightful autonomy of the practical reason means that man possesses in himself his own law, received from the Creator. Nevertheless, *the autonomy of reason cannot mean* that reason itself *creates values and moral norms.* Were this autonomy to imply a denial of the participation of the practical reason in the wisdom of the divine Creator and Lawgiver, or were it to suggest a freedom which creates moral norms on the basis of historical contingencies or the diversity of societies and cultures, this sort of alleged autonomy would contradict the Church's teaching on the truth about man (VS 40).

Just as in the debates of the 13th century the Catholic theologian and philosopher Thomas Aquinas was obliged to affirm the dignity and capacity of human reason in relation to issues of public order and morality, so again in the 20th century we find the Bishop of Rome, Pope John Paul II, emphasising the capacity of human reason to recognise the truth

about human nature and moral obligation. The continuity in this teaching is striking, despite the differences. The medieval Dominican teacher was obliged to challenge the claims of the pious monarchs who wished to justify their policies with religious arguments. The Pope of the late 20th century felt obliged to challenge certain widespread popular views which had the support of philosophical theories. There are significant differences between these two types of opponent. But the need to affirm the capacity and dignity of human reason is common to both situations. Also common is the perception that the issues are not trivial, but are vitally important for the conduct of political life. The political implication in the medieval debates about the appropriate source and matter for civil law is evident. The political implication of John Paul II's essays in moral philosophy is less evident, but it comes into focus when attention is drawn to the precariousness of a global political order predicated on human rights, which is unable to appeal to any moral grounding of those rights. Human rights which cannot be rationally sustained over against political power are vulnerable to that political power. A culture which affirms human rights as foundational, and at the same time proclaims its scepticism about moral truth and knowledge of human nature, undermines its own foundations and abandons any hope of challenging the powerful whose redefinitions must then appear to be just as valid as any other. The Catholic tradition of defending human reason is therefore highly political, providing a bulwark against tyranny.

In The Name of Allah

FAITH AND REASON IN SHIᶜITE THOUGHT

Mohsen Javadi

The two main sources of Shiᶜite thought, the Noble Qur'an and hadiths, especially the narrations from the twelve Imams, both endorse reason in different ways.

In the Noble Qur'an, we can find more than fifty occurrences of the word 'reason' *('aql)* and its derivatives. If we consider the usage of synonyms to 'reason' such as thought *(tafakkur)*, knowledge *('ilm)*, deliberation or meditation *(tadabbur)* and remembrance *(tadhakkur)*, we can find more than three hundred verses of the Qur'an that speak of reason with a tone of admiration and approval.[1] Furthermore, in most of the narrative collections, we see an introductory chapter that speaks of the importance and significance of human reason and its merits. In the most famous Shiᶜite narration book called *Al-Kafi*, the very first section is entitled, 'The Book of Reason and Ignorance' which contains thirty-four traditions about reason.

Here we only refer to two verses of the Qur'an and some traditions to show the status of reason in the view of the Shiᶜite school.

The noble Qur'an says: 'the worst animals before God are the deaf and dumb, those who do not use their reason' (8: 22). According to this verse, if human beings do not use their reason, they will be worth even less than the animals which have no reason at all.

In the second verse God says: 'And they will say 'if we had only listened and reasoned things out, we would not have been among the dwellers of the blazing fire! ' (67: 10). According to this verse human beings can only save themselves from wretchedness by listening to the voices of the prophets and using reason to understand their message and so acting on this guidance.[2]

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[1] Tabataba'i, *Al-Mizan*, Vol. 5, p. 255.

[2] There is some controversy in explaining this verse. Tabarsi, one of the most important Shi'ite scholars in the sixth century takes listening and reasoning to be identical here. See *Majma'*

Here I would also mention some Shi'ite narrations: in the first narration of *Al-Kafi*, God approves of reason and takes it as the most beloved creatures and as the criterion for reward and punishment.

In the second narration from Imam 'Ali, we see a very good and important point that is put in a symbolic way: after creating Adam, God offered him a choice of only one of the three valuable things: *reason, modesty* and *faith*. Adam chose reason and after that Gabriel asked modesty and faith to leave Adam. But they relied that they were ordered by God to stay alongside reason and, in this way, confessed that they are subservient to human reason. We know that modesty is the core of the moral sentiments and every one who lacks it will lose moral motivation and be led to immorality. We see also that in this narration faith is considered as one of the consequences of human reason. The metaphorical meaning of this narration is that moral and religious life can be acquired only in the light of reason.

Imam 'Ali (Peace be upon him) says that those who have no reason have no faith.[3] He also says that the depth and level of everyone's faith is in accordance with his reason.[4] And again, he says that only reason can improve and reconstruct the religious life.[5] In a famous narrative Shi'ite sources take reason as an internal messenger of God alongside the external messengers of God, namely the prophets. In this context, it is completely natural that the Shi'ite school cannot see any conflict between the demands of human reason as internal messenger of God and the content of revelation as the external messenger of God. What is dubious and very questionable is to leave aside these very important teachings and reject reason or revelation or separate them.

The meaning of *reason* and *faith*

The word 'reason' has more than six meanings in Islamic literature and we cannot discuss all of them, so we concentrate only on its usage in *kalam*

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al-Bayan, Vol. 10, p. 72. But on the other hand, Tabataba'i takes the listening as an alternative to reasoning in the way that the former belongs to the majority of people who may not be able to argue properly and the latter to the select group of people who can. See Tabataba'i, *Al-Mizan*, Vol. 19, p. 353.

3 *Sharh Ghurar*, Vol. 6, p. 400, No. 10768.

4 *Op cit.*, Vol. 4, p. 313, No 6183.

5 *Op cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 353, No 1341.

(discursive theology). In *kalam* 'reason' principally refers to some gifted knowledge that human beings possess without knowing how and from where it has been acquired, similar to the Christian concept of natural or general revelation. This original and primary knowledge of humanity is the basis of its secondary and derivative knowledge, and nearly all of humanity has it. The truths of reason include logical rules by virtue of which we can increase our original knowledge (because of which logic has been called an *organon*). And also we can enhance the power of our reason by observing the signs of God around us. The Glorious Qur'an in this regard says that 'have they not travelled around the Earth so they may acquire hearts to reason with or ears to listen with?' (22: 46)

There is a controversy about the number of basic non-derivative principles of human reason, so that some restricted them to only a few and some extended them to more than twenty cases. At any rate, what is important is the potential of our reason to be perfected.

This fundamental knowledge is divided into two different branches: theoretical and practical. Some of these principles, such as the principle of non-contradiction, only helps us to discover some reality in this world and belongs to our theoretical reason, and some of them help us to find a way for living and acting such as the principle of the goodness of justice.

It may be noted that this contrast between theoretical and practical reason is usually misunderstood and confused with some recent theories in morality that deny that moral and practical principles are discovered to be true. Also there is some evidence in our tradition for this interpretation of practical reason as only having a motivating function rather than having cognitive content, but we find in many cases that leading figures of Islamic philosophy and theology take practical reason as guiding via the discovery of facts.

The goodness of justice shows us a very important reality about justice and in this regard is akin to other assertive statements but furthermore stimulates us to act in accordance with justice in virtue of having that property. In the words of Ayatollah Mutahhari the motivation given by practical reason is due to its showing a desirable thing for transcendent human ego.[6] It is held that the human soul is composed of several egos, usually divided into two: the lower or base soul and the

[6] This view is also held by Akhund Khorasani in his famous book on the principles of jurisprudence, *Kifayat al-Usul*.

higher or transcendent soul or ego. Each of these egos is attracted to things appropriate to it, the lower soul is attracted to physical beauties that stimulate the appetite, while the higher ego is attracted to moral excellences and virtues, love of God, charity, etc. Hence, the fact that practical reason motivates action does not contradict the fact that it also discovers moral truths.

So, in this paper, the term 'reason' is used for the content, whether theoretical or practical, obtained through the faculty of reason, not for the faculty itself, because obviously there is no conflict between faith and the faculty of reason. The alleged conflict can only be imagined between the propositions obtained through reason and those obtained through revelation.

Next we must explain briefly what we mean by 'faith'. As we know, there is an ongoing debate in the philosophy of religion about the definition of the basic elements of faith. In brief, we think that faith must have some cognitive elements showing a transcendent being who is omnipotent, omniscience and absolutely good. Every interpretation of faith according to which faith lacks any cognitive content is unacceptable and will reduce faith to some emotional states of mind. Reducing the cognitive element of faith is very common in positivist circles and also among those who are influenced by empiricism. So we must preserve the aspect of discovery in faith through which the highest level of reality is disclosed to human kind. We can call this side of faith the theoretical dimension of faith.

On the other hand we must remember that discovering the highest reality and even seeing it is not sufficient to be given the name of faith. Faith, inevitably, contains an element of submission and commitment, so if we discover God but do not submit ourselves to Him and do not act in accordance with His revelation or, in Islamic terms, *shari'ah*, we will not be among the people of faith. Faith is not just the assent of reason but also requires us to have some devotion towards God and to act in a certain way. This is the practical dimension of faith.

We can conclude that faith parallels reason in having a twofold character: namely theoretical and practical dimensions.

So, multiplying the two forms of reason by the two elements of faith we can ask four questions: (a) what is the relation of theoretical reason to the cognitive element of faith? (b) what is the relation of theoretical reason to the practical dimension of faith? (c) what is the relation of

practical reason to the theoretical side of faith? And finally, (d) what is the relation of practical reason to the practical dimension of faith?

Here, we only discuss two questions, namely (a) and (d) and leave the other questions for another time.

The relation between theoretical reason and theoretical faith

Three theoretical articles of faith common to all the Abrahamic religions are belief in God, the resurrection and the prophets. Knowing God and understanding the resurrection of mankind and also accepting the mediating role of the prophets constitute theoretical object-claims, claims that cannot be reduced to mental or subjective attitudes or states. On the other hand, human reason makes many object-claims about the reality and the structure of the world. What relation can be held between these religious claims and the other claims of reason? To discuss the problem exactly, we must explain the form of religious claims and then consider their relation to non-religious claims.

Some Muslim scholars, such as Shaykh Saduq, hold that the basic religious claims are innate and cannot be—or at least need not be—inferred from other deliverances of reason. Their belief in this idea is rooted in some verses of the Qur'an and some narrations of the Twelve Imams. God says: 'So set your face on the religion as a people of pure faith, the origination of God, according to which He originated mankind. There is no altering God's creation. That is the upright religion, but most people do not know.' (30: 30).

They interpret this verse as asserting that religion is something that human reason has from the very beginning of creation, and that the prophets have come to invite us to pay more attention to this innate character of our reason. If we accept the innateness of religious claims, especially belief in God, then the question of the relation between theoretical faith and reason comes to be a question of the coherence between different basic non-inferential claims of reason. The basic claims of reason cannot contradict each other; so, to justify religious belief, we need only to show that it is an innate understanding of our reason. What is needed to justify religious belief is not logical proof, but phenomenology.

On the other hand, many of the important figures in Islamic philosophy, theology and even jurisprudence, hold that religious claims, especially the claim of God's existence, are not innate and can be acquired only by argumentation. Shaykh Mufid, Sayyid Murtada, Shaykh Tusi and many others interpret the verse mentioned above in another way to mean that accepting religious claims is not innate in human reason but is the end or goal of a thoughtful endeavour. The prophets invite us to know a new thing which was not known by us before. For them the question of relation comes to take the form of the possibility of inferring a religious claim—say God's existence—from natural reason. This inevitability of argumentation for religious claims has led Islamic scholars to seek arguments for religious beliefs over the course of centuries. The Shi'ite tradition is full of different arguments for religious claims. Because of this, Shi'ite theology has taken the form of a philosophical theology and we cannot distinguish discussions of God, resurrection and the prophets in Shi'ite theology from those found in philosophy.

The domination of this rationalistic approach in the Shi'ite tradition was, and still is, so strong that even in the beginning of the standard books of practical religious rulings of Shi'ite jurisprudence *(risalah)*, the jurists advise those who would follow them that in the area of the theoretical dimensions of faith all people must rely on their own reason and it is not acceptable to hold such beliefs by way of imitation. This rich tradition of rational discourse in the Shi'ite school has been understood mainly through the teachings of the Twelve Imams, but is now available to all. Various models of argumentation have been employed, including demonstration, dialectic and rhetoric as the circumstances demand. So, according to this idea, although religious beliefs are not among the original and basic deliverances of human reason, they are derived and inferred from natural reason or, in the words of Muslim theologians, are among those that reason urges us to accept.

There are some important points that must be mentioned in this regard:

a) There is a growing tradition in western culture called reformed epistemology, according to which reason cannot, or need not, prove God's existence but can justify belief in Him. For example, Plantinga holds that the belief in God can be properly basic and not inferential, or can be warranted with reference to some external elements of our cognitive

faculties. This form of apologetic for religious belief is sometimes confused with the idea of the innateness of religious belief which was and is still held by some Muslim theologians. But we must keep in mind that the idea of innateness is not an apologetic idea, but is to assert that reason by itself and without any mediation sees and understands God's existence. In other words, this is a first order claim while the reformed epistemology is a second order claim concerning human beliefs that tries to show that this form of belief, despite the possibility of error, is rationally justified. The dominant idea of the necessity for argumentation to support religious beliefs is to deny the core idea of reformed epistemology. According to reformed epistemology, one can be entitled to the name 'believer' by a chance of accidentally having some religious belief, while being justified or warranted is an independent epistemic problem. The failure to have justified or warranted belief does not prevent one from having correct religious beliefs. However, in the Shi'ite theological tradition, the rational justification of one's beliefs is considered a necessary condition for faith. One may only be called a believer if one tries and successfully grasps the main principles of faith. This is the only sort of faith that can be the centre of the galaxy of virtue and on which divine reward and punishment can be based.

b) We have been told that natural reason in the Shi'ite tradition has been admitted, approved and counted as the basis of faith. But there is a difficulty in this treatment of reason. Natural reason, especially logical arguments, in some cases lead people to take contradictory positions about religious claims.

We must keep in mind that the occurrence of error in using human reason is undeniable; at the same time, this does not mean that all usage of reason is in error. We must distinguish between correct inferences of natural reason and its mistakes in application. When we talk about natural reason and take it to lead us to religious truths, we assume that we will use it correctly. This problem is not limited to natural reason, but will arise in the case of the guidance of revelation, as well. This revealed knowledge that God has sent to help people to find their happiness, unfortunately, in many cases is misunderstood. This is why we find some people who use allegedly religious beliefs to justify war, the occupation of the lands of others, financial corruption and terrorism. This is the problem of *the person* who relies on reason or revelation and not reason or revelation by

themselves. In the Qur'an, God says 'Thereby [by parables in revelation] He leads many astray and thereby He guides many and He leads no one astray save the transgressors' (2: 25).

In using our faculty of natural reason we need to distinguish correct premises from erroneous ones, and the same applies to revelation. We need to distinguish the definitive verses from the equivocal ones,[7] and the reliable narrations from the unreliable ones.

c) Although reason is common among human beings, we see that in many verses of the Qur'an it is asserted that in practice only the purified people can think or reason, or can remember, and immoral persons can not grasp good knowledge. 'Yet no one takes admonition except he who returns penitently to Allah' (40: 13), 'And whoever is wary of Allah, He shall make a way out for him and provide for him from whence he does not reckon' (65: 2). And there are many narrations that show that having a good knowledge depends on having a good religious and moral character.

Allamah Tabataba'i replies that purification and good actions are not a separate way of knowledge, but are only a context for employing reason in an appropriate way. It is worth quoting him at length on this issue:

> There is no doubt that the Qur'an and hadiths give importance to piety in respect of knowledge. But it does not mean that they have made piety an independent way for acquiring knowledge of realities, separate from the natural way of contemplation which man inevitably treads upon. Otherwise, all the arguments and disputations brought in the noble Book against the unbelievers, polytheists, and immoral and sinful persons would become irrelevant—they do not follow the truth and do not know what piety and remembrance is; accordingly, they are unable to attain the intended goal. Consequently, it is pointless to argue with them ... In fact, piety is considered necessary for bringing the human intelligent soul back to its natural uprightness.[8]
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> The foregoing details clearly show that the Qur'an has made thought, remembrance and understanding conditional upon

[7] See Qur'an (3: 7).

[8] *Al-Mizan*, tr. Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, WOFIS, Tehran, 2001, Vol. 10, p. 85 (with slight changes in the translation).

> piety (God-fearing), and has joined knowledge with practice in order that man may attain to straight thinking and correct knowledge which is free from animalistic imaginations and Satanic insinuations.[9]

Allamah Tabataba'i adds that although following the way of piety makes otherwise unavailable knowledge accessible to man, this claim does not conflict with the general support given in the Qur'an to natural reason independent of piety. So, piety provides an endorsement of theoretical reason at the same time that it provides support for theoretical faith.

d) We have argued that the principal theoretical doctrines of religion are deliverances of natural reason, but there is another problem concerning the relation of reason not to the principals but to other subsidiary theoretical teachings of religion. Here, for example, we can ask about the relation of religious doctrines about the creation of the world and the heavens to philosophical or scientific knowledge. Here I can say briefly that according to Shi'ite tradition, reason and its achievements, if obtained in a correct way, may legitimately affect how we are to understand religion. In the words of the exegetes of the Qur'an, reason can provide a sort of non-linguistic context in terms of which the text itself is to be understood. Certainly revelation is a mirror of God's creation, and by using our reason we can better see what the reality in that mirror is.

The relation between practical reason and practical faith

The practical principles of natural reason such as the goodness of justice are aimed at action, but as we mentioned, contrary to some non-cognitive interpretations of ethics, this aiming at action comes from its aiming at truth. Hence, practical reason, just as much as theoretical reason, is concerned with discovery. But what about the practical rules of religion?

There is a theological school in the Muslim world called *Ash'ari*, whose adherents hold a form of divine command theory according to which what is right or good is entirely dependent on the voluntary and arbitrary decrees of God. This theory is incompatible with moral realism.

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[9] *Ibid.*, 88.

Knowing what is right, in the Ash'arite theory, is reduced to knowing what God wants; it does not involve the discovery of the nature of moral reality. When God says that justice is good, He only asks us to act accordingly and does not make any objective claim about moral facts. According to this view, moral properties of things are subjective claims in relation to God. In Islamic terms the moral properties are not essential *(dhati)*, but are divine *(ilahi)*. If we interpret the moral properties in this way, the natural way to understand goodness and badness is to take them from revelation and not by natural reason. According to this divine command theory, there is nothing in reality to be discovered as the basis of rational guidance. Human reason in practical matters must only try to hear exactly the voice of revelation and act accordingly.

Contrary to this school, Shi'ite tradition holds that the moral properties are rooted in the very essence of things and religious practical rules are based on these objective properties. According to this view, moral properties are essential *(dhati)* and at the heart of reality. Reason has the power to understand these properties, and human beings can have morality even without religion. Furthermore, religion itself can be accepted only by having some independent rational reason, because if good and evil are entirely dependent on revelation, the good of the revelation itself is undermined, for we would not have any means independent of the revelation to verify it and submit to it.[10]

In this rationalistic approach, we encounter a question of occurrences of conflict between religious rules of life and human independent practical understanding. It may seem that there are more conflicts between practical reason and religious rules of behaviour than the conflicts between theoretical reason and religious doctrines. However, in the Shi'ite school, the two sorts of apparent conflict are really one, for the deliverances of practical reason revert to theoretical points, and contrary to divine command theory, the practical rules of religion are also grounded in moral realities, so that there can be no conflict with the deliverances of practical reason here. However, it often appears that there are differences because of an incorrect understanding of the moral realities involved. Allamah Tabataba'i explains that in this area, since what is at stake often includes worldly profit and loss, human beings are more likely to rationalize their desires and proclaim something to be derived

[10] Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Nawbakht, *Al-Yaqut*, Bidar, Qum, 1984, p. 51.

from reason when it is really due to worldly desires. Here religion can help by providing us with guidance so that such self-deceptions can be avoided. On the other hand, in areas where reason gives clear indication of what is right or wrong and there is an apparent conflict with religion, we will have to reform our understanding of religion. Thus, whenever there seems to be a conflict between a position made by reason and another made by religion we must re-examine both and be sure that at least there has been one mistake whether in understanding real judgement of reason or real judgement of religion.

AUTHORITY AND TRADITION IN THE CATHOLIC TRADITION

Abbot Mark Serna OSB

1 Definition and nature of authority as understood in the Catholic tradition

a. From the Latin *auctoritas,* from *auctor* (cause, sponsor, promoter, surety), from *augere* (to increase [transitive and intransitive], to enrich). The term comes from Roman culture and its sober legal ethos. *Auctoritas* was the legal term for surety in a transaction and responsibility for a minor, it also referred to the weight of an opinion. It then came to mean the respect, dignity and importance given to the person concerned. Today we can distinguish between personal/subjective authority and official/objective authority. Personal authority derives from the recognition of someone's superiority in a given sphere, and it exists inasmuch as it is respected. Official authority is derived not by reason of personal superiority but by reason of a function or office conferred on him or respected by society. Ideally, the holder of official authority should also possess personal authority. Yet, since official authority is based essentially in its role in the good of society, its scope and function must be determined by its function and not by the personal qualities of the bearer of such authority.

b. The bearer of authority is entitled to make demands on others as it's valuable in itself for the good of authority's fellow men.

c. Authority shares in the fullness of God's being and imparts it to others for their fulfilment. It comes from God and has a right to exist in so far as it is transparent to God's designs and commands for the perfection of man, and so embodies and mediates such perfection.

d. Authority can only exist with respect to intellectual beings. So man's freedom and reason are addressed by authority, it appeals to his free assent,

it demands his personal involvement. So the appeal of authority is fully integrated into the freedom of the subject's decision, it is directed to a moral subject.

e. Authority is distinguished from power and coercion. Authority begins where it is freely acknowledged and ends where it becomes power. It appeals to freedom. It persuades, it does not compel.

f. Authority is a function of the social fabric, it is in the service of others and their freedom. Authority embodies the end to which all persons are ordered, which is human flourishing and personal fulfilment.

g. Human nature calls for authority, because the human person is a creature of undefined possibilities who must become a 'personality.'

h. Authority can sin and make mistakes.

i. Like all things human, authority's measure of excellence is its ordination to God and ordaining its subjects to God. He alone is the horizon of all happiness and personal fulfilment.

j. Authority has two functions: as a substitute in a tutelary role, and a permanent function in regulating and organizing in light of a common end for society. Society is a unity of order. As Aquinas says, the chief task of authority in society is the preservation of order.

k. The need for authority grows with the progressive diversity of society. All progress makes the preservation of order more difficult and demands of society more sophisticated structures. Structures ensure development, social progress and human fulfilment. Freedom and authority are complementary.

l. State authority is different from that of the Church because their ends are different. The more exactly and concretely the goal can be envisioned the more exact can the measure of authority be described. The various forms of authority have analogous characters.

a. From the beginning of the church's life she recognized that the exercise of authority among its members was to be different from other human groups.

b. This distinction is based on the Gospel and the life of Jesus himself. Authority in the Christian community is exercised as 'one who serves' (Lk 22:24-27) and in imitation of Jesus, the Master, who washes the feet of his disciples (Jn 13:1-17).

c. Authority in the Christian community is based on the authority of Jesus himself and his commission to his disciples: 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age' (Mt 28:18-20). Authority is also based on the 'Spirit of truth' who guides the disciples into all truth, and takes what is Jesus' and declares it to his disciples (Jn 16:12-15).

d. So authority in the early Church is not a mere social reality or necessity, but it is spiritual authority coming from God himself in His Son Jesus Christ, and this Spirit-based authority is shared with the Church, the Body of Christ, for its fulfilment and perfection.

e. In the New Testament Spirit-based authority is found in a variety of forms and gifts of service: apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, healers, helpers, administrators, speakers of tongues (1Cor 12:4-31, Eph 4:11, Rom 12:6-8). These gifts are for the service of the Church and not for domination over her members. In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in the section titled 'The Hierarchical Constitution of the Church' we read: 'Christ is himself the source of ministry in the Church. He instituted the Church. He gave her authority and mission, orientation and goal: [then quoting from *Lumen Gentium*, or, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*] 'In order to shepherd the People of God and to increase its numbers without cease, Christ the Lord set up in his Church a variety of offices which aim at the good of the whole body. The holders of office, who are invested

with a sacred power, are, in fact, dedicated to promoting the interests of their brethren, so that all who belong to the People of God ... may attain to salvation' (n. 874).

f. In the interests of time and brevity I will not give an historical summary of the development of authority in the Church from the apostolic period to the time ofVatican II. It might be enough to say that over the centuries some of the key and recurring themes have been papal authority, especially in relation to the bishops (the issue of collegiality), centralizing and juridizing of authority, the relation of authority and tradition, debates over papal infallibility, the diversity of the local churches, the Petrine office as focus of unity, the Petrine office as one of service, etc.

g. Let me close this section on authority by dealing with two specific topics: the authority of the Pope and of the bishops. I should like to quote directly at length from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (nn. 880-883, 889-892):

> When Christ instituted the Twelve, 'he constituted [them] in the form of a college or permanent assembly, at the head of which he placed Peter, chosen from among them.' Just as 'by the Lord's institution, St. Peter and the rest of the apostles constitute a single apostolic college, so in like fashion the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, and the bishops, the successors of the apostles, are related with and united to one another.' The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the 'rock' of his Church. He gave him the keys of his Church and instituted him shepherd of the whole flock. 'The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of apostles united to its head.' This pastoral office of Peter and the other apostles belongs to the Church's very foundation and is continued by the bishops under the primacy of the Pope. The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, 'is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful.' 'For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered.' 'The college or body of bishops has no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter's

successor, as its head.' As such, this college has 'supreme and full authority over the universal Church; but this power cannot be exercised without the agreement of the Roman Pontiff.'

In order to preserve the Church in the purity of the faith handed on by the apostles, Christ who is the Truth willed to confer on her a share in his own infallibility. By a 'supernatural sense of faith' the People of God, under the guidance of the Church's living Magisterium, 'unfailingly adheres to this faith.' The mission of the Magisterium is linked to the definitive nature of the covenant established by God with his people in Christ. It is this Magisterium's task to preserve God's people from deviations and defections and to guarantee them the objective possibility of professing the true faith without error. Thus, the pastoral duty of the Magisterium is aimed at seeing to it that the People of God abides in the truth that liberates. To fulfill this service, Christ endowed the Church's shepherds with the charism of infallibility in matters of faith and morals. The exercise of this charism takes several forms: 'The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful—who confirms his brethren in the faith he proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals. ... The infallibility promised to the Church is also present in the body of bishops when, together with Peter's successor, they exercise the supreme Magisterium,' above all in an Ecumenical Council. When the Church through its supreme Magisterium proposes a doctrine 'for belief as being divinely revealed,' and as the teaching of Christ, the definitions 'must be adhered to with the obedience of faith.' This infallibility extends as far as the deposit of divine Revelation itself. Divine assistance is also given to the successors of the apostles, teaching in communion with the successor of Peter, and, in a particular way, to the bishop of Rome, pastor of the whole Church, when, without arriving at an infallible definition and without pronouncing in a 'definitive manner,' they propose in the exercise of the ordinary Magisterium a teaching that leads to better understanding of Revelation in matters of faith and morals. To this ordinary teaching the faithful 'are to adhere to it with religious assent' which, though distinct from the assent of faith, is nonetheless an extension of it.

3 Tradition in the Catholic Church

a. This brief over view of the Roman Catholic understanding of tradition will need to leave out some lines of investigation. A more exhaustive treatment would include a fuller exposition of the relationship of tradition to the doctrine on the Church, Revelation and Scripture.

b. The word tradition derives from the Latin, *traditio,* corresponding to the Greek *paradosis.* In both cases the meaning is 'transmission.' The basic meaning is the transmission in the church of beliefs, doctrines, rituals and scriptures. Tradition can refer both to what is transmitted (an object or content) and to how it is transmitted (a process).

c. Source: apostolic or post-apostolic.

d. Form: written (any writing or only holy scripture) or unwritten.

e. Function in the church: memory of the past and anticipation of the future. So it is then preservative and constitutive of doctrine.

f. Scriptural and non-scriptural.

g. God has revealed himself to humankind and this revelation has been completed and brought to perfection in the life and teaching of the incarnate Word. Consequently, no new public revelation of God to humankind is possible until the parousia.

h. Persons receive their salvation in the encounter with Christ. The question, however, is how does the fullness of God's revelation reach the individual incorrupt and unmixed with error? How is the human person to be sure that it is God's word he encounters rather than mere human claims? The Catholic answer is: through the tradition of the Church.

i. The word of God and his gifts reach men and women through the preaching handed down in the Church, the mystery of Christ remains active and present in history in the fellowship of believers who preserve the word in the vital process of doctrine, life and worship, and all this through the assistance of the Holy Spirit promised to his Church by Christ himself.

j. Tradition is living because it is based on the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The apostles experienced Jesus as the life saving event for them and all humankind. According to Jesus' own mandate the apostles bore testimony to him. Consequently, the words and actions of this apostolic testimony form the permanent basis of all Christian tradition.

k. These apostolic witnesses understood that their testimony was not simply the transmission of past events in words and memory, a testimony active only as an idea. Rather, it is the risen Lord himself and his Spirit who is living and active in the community of believers, challenges man in his freedom, offers grace and gives life.

l. Vatican II developed the understanding of tradition from what it was in the post-Tridentine period. In the Council's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation it is not treated primarily as matter, always the same, which is handed on in propositions and practices. Rather, tradition is faith as lived. 'The Church, in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes' (*Dei Verbum*, art. 8).

m. So when taken in its full sense tradition is not exclusively the transmission of God's word in Scripture, or the transmission of truths and forms of worship not committed to writing. Tradition includes these, but primarily tradition is the faith of the Church in action, because Christ is active in this faith and not all that is done in faith is accessible to reflection and expression. So it is the Church's life of faith which is the ultimate norm for criticism of tradition in the Church.

n. We see, then, that tradition is prior to the formulation of the Scriptures and it is at the base of all faith.

o. Content of tradition. Notwithstanding what has just been stated, it must be possible to formulate tradition in forms that make the event upon which faith is based accessible to all ages. The community of believers gives expression to its faith in writing. This is what happened in the early Church.

p. First century. Apostolic preaching committed to writing in the books of the New Testament. This written testimony to the faith of the primitive Church was willed by God to be permanently normative for later times, so it is directly inspired by God. The Scripture is the word of God, to which the Church's faith is bound, from which it is nourished, and by which it directs its steps. The magisterium, or teaching office of the Church, in all its forms and expressions, is a humble hearer and servant of this primitive tradition of the Church, which is inspired by God and set in writing in Scripture.

q. Post-biblical traditions. The very historicity of the Church as a community of faith implies that there will be post-biblical traditions which require the assent of belief. In the Catholic tradition the notion of tradition is broader than the *sola scriptura* of the Reformers. The NT does not claim to present the content of the faith of the primitive Church without omissions. It can be said that the faith of the primitive Church was more extensive than what was committed to writing in the books of the NT.

r. So even when the original tradition was committed to writing in Sacred Scripture in the first Christian generation, the 'mind' of the believing Church, itself transmitted in tradition, is the formal norm for the interpretation of Scripture. In this sense it is said that there are two sources of Revelation: Scripture and Tradition. Logically, tradition precedes Scripture; yet, because the believing mind of the later Church (tradition) is bound to the preaching of the apostolic period, of which Scripture contains at least the substance, Scripture remains (for all practical purposes) the sole material source of the faith drawn upon by later Tradition.

s. This does not mean (quite the contrary) that the ongoing history of the Church's believing mind may not see important developments and new actualizations of Scriptural truths. The Church holds and believes that this process is safeguarded by the assistance of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus promises to his Church.

t. Now some points about the expression of tradition and its teaching in the life of the Church:

i. Dogmatically binding declarations of Church doctrine are obligatory only when they are concerned with truths that have been revealed by God for our salvation.

ii. Hierarchy of truths. Catholic theologians take it for granted that not all revealed truths are part of the knowledge of the faith necessary for salvation.

iii. Under the assistance of the Holy Spirit promised to the Church by Scripture there can be progress and growth in the understanding of the matters and words of tradition. In particular, the Church, as a whole, may recognize a given truth of faith is obligatory not only for its own time but for the whole time of the Church., and so declare it. All such declarations are not the product of human arbitrariness (e.g., the Pope's). For nothing can be defined which has not been long believed by the Church and recognized as belonging to the substance of faith.

iv. A definition of the magisterium stemming from the piety of a Pope or a minority in the Church has never in fact been proclaimed, and cannot be possible.

u. Now by way of summary I read from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 84-100:

III The interpretation of the heritage of faith

The heritage of faith entrusted to the whole of the Church

84 The apostles entrusted the 'Sacred deposit' of the faith (the *depositum fidei*),[45] contained in Sacred Scripture and Tradition, to the whole of the Church. 'By adhering to [this heritage] the entire holy people, united to its pastors, remains always faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. So, in maintaining, practising and professing the faith that has been handed on, there should be a remarkable harmony between the bishops and the faithful.'[46]

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[45] *Dei Verbum (DV)* 10 § 1; cf. *1 Tim* 6:20; *2 Tim* 1:12-14 (Vulg.). [Note: the footnotes within paras. 84-100 refer to footnotes in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (cf. http://www.vatican.va/archive/catechism/p1s1c2a2.htm#II); also paras. 84-100 are taken from *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.]

[46] *DV* 10 § 1; cf. *Acts* 2:42 (Greek); Pius XII, apostolic constitution, *Munificentissimus Deus*, 1 November 1950: Acta Apostolicae Sedis (AAS) 42 (1950), 756, taken along with the words of St Cyprian, *Epist.* 66, 8: CSEL 3/2,733: 'The Church is the people united to its Priests, the flock adhering to its Shepherd.'

The Magisterium of the Church

85 'The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ.'[47] This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.

86 'Yet this Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it listens to this devotedly, guards it with dedication and expounds it faithfully. All that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is drawn from this single deposit of faith.'[48]

87 Mindful of Christ's words to his apostles: 'He who hears you, hears me',[49] the faithful receive with docility the teachings and directives that their pastors give them in different forms.

The dogmas of the faith

88 The Church's Magisterium exercises the authority it holds from Christ to the fullest extent when it defines dogmas, that is, when it proposes, in a form obliging the Christian people to an irrevocable adherence of faith, truths contained in divine Revelation or also when it proposes, in a definitive way, truths having a necessary connection with these.

89 There is an organic connection between our spiritual life and the dogmas. Dogmas are lights along the path of faith; they illuminate it and make it secure. Conversely, if our life is upright, our intellect and heart will be open to welcome the light shed by the dogmas of faith.[50]

90 The mutual connections between dogmas, and their coherence, can be found in the whole of the Revelation of the mystery of Christ.[51] 'In Catholic doctrine there exists an order or hierarchy of truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith.'[52]

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[47] *DV* 10 § 2.

[48] *DV* 10 para 2.

[49] *Lk* 10:16; cf. *Lumen Gentium* (*LG*) 20.

[50] Cf. *Jn* 8:31-32.

[51] Cf. Vatican Council I: Denzinger-Schonmetzer, Enchiridion Symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum (1965) (DS) 3016: *nexus mysteriorum*; *LG* 25.

[52] *Unitatis redintegratio* (*UR*) II.

The supernatural sense of faith

91 All the faithful share in understanding and handing on revealed truth. They have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit, who instructs them[53] and guides them into all truth.[54]

92 'The whole body of the faithful ... cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the supernatural appreciation of faith (*sensus fidei*) on the part of the whole people, when, from the bishops to the last of the faithful, they manifest a universal consent in matters of faith and morals.'[55]

93 'By this appreciation of the faith, aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, the People of God, guided by the sacred teaching authority (*Magisterium*), ... receives ... the faith, once for all delivered to the saints ... The People unfailingly adheres to this faith, penetrates it more deeply with right judgment, and applies it more fully in daily life.'[56]

Growth in understanding the faith

94 Thanks to the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the understanding of both the realities and the words of the heritage of faith is able to grow in the life of the Church:

—'through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts';[57] it is in particular 'theological research [which] deepens knowledge of revealed truth'.[58]

—'from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which [believers] experience',[59] the sacred Scriptures 'grow with the one who reads them.'[60]

—'from the preaching of those who have received, along with their right of succession in the episcopate, the sure charism of truth'.[61]

95 'It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.'[62]

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[53] Cf. *1 Jn* 2:20,27.
[54] Cf. *Jn* 16:13.
[55] *LG* 12; cf. St Augustine, *De praed. sanct.* 14,27: PL 44,980.
[56] *LG* 12; cf. *Jude* 3.
[57] *DV* 8 § 2; cf. *Lk* 2:19,51.
[58] *Gaudium et Spes* (*GS*)62 § 7; cf. *GS* 44 § 2; *DV* 23; 24; *UR* 4.
[59] *DV* 8 § 2.
[60] *DV* 8 § 2.
[61] St Gregory the Great, *Hom. in Ez.* 1,7,8: PL 76, 843D.
[62] *DV* 10 § 3.

In brief

96 What Christ entrusted to the apostles, they in turn handed on by their preaching and writing, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to all generations, until Christ returns in glory.

97 'Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God' (DV 10) in which, as in a mirror, the pilgrim Church contemplates God, the source of all her riches.

98 'The Church, in her doctrine, life and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes' (DV 8 § 1).

99 Thanks to its supernatural sense of faith, the People of God as a whole never ceases to welcome, to penetrate more deeply and to live more fully from the gift of divine Revelation.

100 The task of interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him.

AUTHORITY AND TRADITION

Ghasem Kakaie

Authority, in Islamic terminology, may be defined as *wilayah*. Literally, this term means intimacy, assistance, love, and tenure of office. He who has such qualities is called *wali*. According to the Holy Qur'an, God is to be known as *wali*. God owns all existence[1] and as a result, He leads the universe.[2] Since God is *Wali* and Guardian of the entire world, He is its 'Guide' as well. God, who has authority over the whole of existence, guides every type of existent being to its own way of perfection. Unlike most existent beings, human perfection is to be achieved consciously and freely. Therefore, man is in need of teaching so that this consciousness and freedom may grow.

There are two types of divine guardianship:

a) Generative Guardianship *(al-wilayah al-takwiniyah)*: God has authority over the whole of existence and leads the entire world to perfection. This authority is deterministic and undeniable.
b) Legislative Guardianship *(al-wilayah al-tashri'iyah)*: Human beings are endowed with another kind of guidance. Through prophets, human beings are provided with divine law, and they are free to accept it and act accordingly. If they accept it, they will attain happiness, otherwise they will go astray. Revelation grants human beings what they need for happiness, and meets their spiritual and individual needs through individual and devotional commandments, including supplications and prayer.

According to Islam, human beings' otherworldly happiness passes through this world and, therefore, human beings must be actively

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[1] 'Unto Allah (belongeth) whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the Earth' (the Holy Qur'an, 2: 284).

[2] 'But Allah, He (alone) is the *Wali*' (42: 9), 'Ye have not, beside Him, a *Wali*' (32: 4).

involved in social life. One of the striking aspects of the Holy Qur'an is that it announces plans and rules for social life. In this regard, there are four duties for the Holy Prophet (pbuh):

> i) Receiving what is revealed by God.
> ii) Communicating the revelation to people.
> iii) Interpreting the revelation. In the reception and communication, the Prophet should be infallible and free from error. The language of revelation is sometimes of a certain complexity, however; thus it should be explained and commented upon. The Prophet himself was responsible for interpretation of the Qur'an and explaining divine law in a more detailed account. In this detailing and commenting upon the revelation, the Holy Prophet was infallible and free from error. At the same time, people are asked to act as the Holy Prophet instructs them: 'And whatsoever the messenger giveth you, take it. And whatsoever he forbiddeth, abstain (from it)' (59: 7). Whatsoever was issued by the Holy Prophet is of a revelatory origin: 'Nor doth he speak of (his own) desire. It is naught save an inspiration that is inspired' (53: 3/4). Thus, the Holy Prophet's sayings are absolutely valid and should be accepted. This is also true about his conduct: 'Verily in the messenger of Allah ye have a good example' (33: 21). Thus in addition to the Holy Qur'an, God's legislative guidance has been revealed in the Holy Prophet's *sunnah*, i.e. his sayings and conduct.
> iv) Administering the divine rules: Islam has many social, political, and economical commandments. Clearly, the mere existence of rules cannot guarantee society's happiness. These rules should be executed and rule society. Here, the Holy Prophet's fourth duty entrusted to him by God is execution of rules and establishment of a state. In other words, the Holy Prophet has authority here. This is not only a right, but also an obligation entrusted to the Holy Prophet by God. For example, in the Holy Qur'an, God commands the Holy Prophet: 'thou mayst judge between mankind by that which Allah showeth thee' (4: 105).

Islam draws no sharp line between this world and the other world, between devotional points and political ones. Rather, many Islamic devotional commandments are at the same time political ones. No one has cast doubt on the fact that the Holy Prophet established a state in

his own era, during which he led Muslims and appointed some persons for certain positions. Moreover, on some occasions he issued certain instructions in which rulers' responsibilities were clarified. Also, to settle disputes among people, he appointed judges. He set out the Islamic penal statute. Between him and other tribes and sects, pacts were concluded. In order to study people's and tribes' problems, he appointed some people to collect information, assigned natural resources, equably, to some people to exploit these resources. To levy Islamic taxes, a systematic organization was established; and many times he organized and dispatched peoples to resist attacks by other tribes and states. Such activities made sense only in the light of a state led by the Holy Prophet.

After the Holy Prophet

For Muslims, Muhammad is the last and final prophet. In other words, after his demise the reception of and communication of revelation have come to an end. But as we said, the Holy Prophet had two other offices as well, one of which was the infallible explanation of revelation. The other was that the Holy Prophet had authority and based on this he implemented the divine law and presided over the state. After the Holy Prophet's death, some questions arose about these two last responsibilities. Did infallible commentary upon religion come to an end with the Holy Prophet's death? Is there no other reference whose explanation of the religion cannot be questioned? On the other hand, is there any one appointed by God to execute God's religion and the social rules of religion? In reply to these questions, two general views were formed. The first one, which is that of Sunnis, considers the Holy Qur'an's revelation and the Holy Prophet's *sunnah* to be sufficient, and in this view no one has been appointed by God to execute the religion. In other words, according to them, there is no special authority for the Islamic state.

The Shi'a, on the other hand, believe that after the Holy Prophet's death, his daughter, the Lady Fatima (s), and the Twelve Imams were infallible. After the Holy Prophet , they undertook to comment upon and explain the religious laws in the same way that the Holy Prophet did. In other words, in the same way that the Holy Prophet took religious sciences from an infallible source and communicated them to people, and set out commandments for them which had not apparently been described in

the Holy Qur'an, after him the aforementioned persons are of the same office, free of mistakes in commenting upon the religion, and infallible. According to what is said in Shi'i traditions *(hadiths)*, they are aware of all apparent and hidden aspects of the Holy Qur'an. These persons have three characteristics. The first one is that they are infallible. The second is that they have knowledge of the hidden world, and the third is that they have been appointed by God to this superior office and introduced by the Holy Prophet to Muslims, and have occupied the office of Imamate one after the other. They are perfect human beings and have the highest human characteristics. Thus, in the same way as that of the Holy Prophet, their tradition, i.e. their sayings and conduct, is a firm argument as well. In other words they do not receive the revelation, but they comment upon the infallibly of the Scripture (the Holy Qur'an). In addition to explaining the revelation, these perfect human beings are in charge of executing divine commandments and the establishment of a religious state.

During the 250 years when Imams were present, they had such scientific eminence that even scholars from all schools of Islam benefited from their knowledge. In this period, Imams trained many disciples in the Islamic sciences. Their spiritual appeal was of great influence to Muslims, and they left many supplications and *hadiths*.

As for the administrative system and establishment of a state, the Imams were confronted with many obstacles created by opponents and oppressors, and these obstacles led to the martyrdom of the first eleven Imams; and apart from a short period at the end of Imam 'Ali's life and at the beginning of Imam Hasan's Imamate, there was no possibility for other Imams to establish a state. Finally, there came the Twelfth Imam. Here, the Shi'a reached a new stage, and the theory of concealment which was predicted in Shi'i and Sunni religious and ideological resources, was realized. In other words, at present the Twelfth Imam is concealed from view, but like a sun concealed by clouds, he shows his existential blessings. In other words, his generative guidance continues to guide people spiritually; but people are deprived of his legislative and apparent guidance. According to Shi'i belief, he is still alive, and at the end of the time, he will come together with other prophets including Jesus Christ and establish justice and a just state. Belief in salvation which is part of the fundamental creeds of all religions makes itself apparent in the Shi'i view in the existence of the Imam of the Age. The Shi'a always await his return. Such faith grants a spiritual power to a human being that, in spite

of all problems and difficulties, he considers himself to be happy and remains hopeful.

Occultation and the issue of religious authority

During the lives of the Imams, many scholars benefited from their knowledge. When the occultation started, access to this source of teaching and infallible commentary upon the scripture was very limited. After this time, the esoteric role of the Imams to some extent was inherited by mystics and saints, and their legislative authority was inherited by jurisprudents. There have, of course, been people who have had both dimensions.

All great Sufis were, mediately or immediately, under the training and guidance of Imam 'Ali and the other Imams. For example, Kumayl is attributed to 'Ali (a), Ibrahim Adham to the Fourth Imam, Bayazid Bastami to the Sixth Imam, Shafiq Balkhi and Bushr Hafi to the Seventh Imam, and Ma'ruf Balkhi to the Eighth Imam. These Sufi masters, who considered themselves to be inspired by the Imams, brought others to perfection and appointed them their successors; and in this way, various chains of Sufism were formed. Contrary to the Sunnis, these great Sufis believed that God's religion is not only the Scripture and the Holy Prophet's tradition that may come to an end upon his death; but rather that there should be an Imam and an authority along with the Scripture to comment upon the latter; and this office came to 'Ali and his successors. Thus, this kind of mysticism is to some extent similar to esoteric Shi'ism.

The exoteric aspect and legislative authority of the Imams were inherited by jurisprudents. At the beginning, however, religious scholars contented themselves with narrating the sayings and conduct of the Holy Prophet and Imams. Gradually and with the appearance of various intricate, and new requirements, the need for reflection on, and analysis of, *hadiths* arose, and reason was recognized as necessary for deduction from the Scripture and tradition; and juridical discretion, i.e. rational deduction of new commandments from the Scripture and *sunnah*, emerged as a discipline. Because of the stress that the Shi'a have put on reason, natural theology and philosophy are elevated to a high place among the Shi'i.

A religious jurist is he who becomes, through studying certain sciences and mastering them, able to deduce religious rulings from their sources. The difference between the jurist's view and that of the Imam

is that the former may be mistaken, unlike the latter. Here a jurist is like any expert in any discipline that may make a mistake, yet lay people should follow him. Indeed, following, for example, a jurist is following knowledge and expertise and not the person of the jurist as such. Thus, the authority of the jurist *(wilayat faqih)* means, in fact, the authority of jurisprudence. According to Shi'i jurisprudence, a religious jurist should be alive so that he may recognize the requirements and needs of the age and deduce pertinent Islamic rulings from the Holy Qur'an and *sunnah*. This grants vitality to the Shi'i jurisprudence, instead of being stuck with the views of the early jurists.

Authority of the jurist in society

As mentioned before, in addition to individual rulings and devotional issues, Islam has many social, political, and economic rulings. Moreover, Islam is concerned with the happiness of all mankind and not only those who live in a particular era. In the era of the Holy Prophet and the Imams, they were responsible for doing their best to establish a socio-political system in which Islamic rulings could be practised and human happiness could be secured. In the age of occultation, however, on the one hand such a task cannot be abandoned and people cannot be deprived of it, whilst on the other there is no Imam available. Thus, the question is: who is in charge and competent to undertake such responsibility?

There are two outstanding characteristics of the Imams that make them distinct from others: infallibility (i.e. being free from error and sin) and immense knowledge. When there is no access to the Imams, people naturally should refer to someone who resembles them the most, i.e. someone with the highest level of piety and knowledge. This is why the Shi'a believe that in the time of the occultation it is the responsibility of the just jurist whose piety, knowledge and competence are greater than that of others to be in charge of the Islamic state. This is the same idea which has been crystallized in the Islamic Revolution of Iran and is known as the authority of the jurist.

The basis of this state, however, is its acceptability by the people. For, according to Islam and Shi'ism, without acceptance by the people, the state will be a despotic one. For this reason, the Islamic state in Iran emerged as the Islamic Republic. The term 'Republic' determines the state's form,

and the term 'Islamic' specifies its content. The Islamic Republic means a state whose form is a democracy and whose president is elected by the people, and whose content is Islamic. The role played by a jurist in an Islamic country, i.e. a country in which people have accepted Islam as their way of life, is that of a supervisor or an ideologue. His duty is to supervise the execution of strategies and the overall running of the state. Thus people have to elect from among jurists the most competent and, by listening to him, give him power to practise his authority.

THE EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Wulstan Peterburs OSB

Introduction

Christians believe that Christ established on earth a Church, a community of believers called together by God, so that people may be brought to life with Him in Heaven. Furthermore, this Church is the partial realisation on earth of the Kingdom of God, and within it there are those who have a divine commission to lead worship (particularly in the celebration of the sacraments), to teach and to govern.[1] In seeking to examine the Catholic understanding of the Church and the exercise of authority within it, this paper will describe briefly the nature of the Church as a 'Mystery' and will then move on to an examination of how authority is exercised, both by those entrusted with the task of governing and by all who are asked to bring Christian values to every-day life. The key document for this discussion is the 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church', generally known by its Latin title *Lumen Gentium (LG)*, meaning the 'Light of the Nations', which was officially promulgated on 21 November 1964 by the Second Vatican Council,[2] and presents a theological understanding of the Church.

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[1] In classical theology, all baptised Christians share in the threefold office of Christ, who was Priest (the offer of sacrifice and worship), Prophet (teacher), and King (ruler/shepherd). This theme taken up in Vatican II is drawn from patristic theology, notably the work of Eusebius of Caesarea. The history of the theology of the triple office in traced in L Schick, *Das dreifache Amt Christi und der Kirche: Zur Entstehung und Entwicklung der Trilogien*, Frankfurt & Berne 1982, and more briefly by Y Congar, 'Sur la trilogie: prophete—roi—prettre' in *Revue des sciences philosophiques et theologiques* 67 (1983), pp. 97-115.

[2] Result of the voting on the final version of texts; *Lumen Gentium*: *placet* (for) 2151, *non-placet* (against) 5. R M Wiltgen, *The Rhine flows into the Tiber*, Augustine Publishing Company, Chumleigh, Devon 1978, p. 240.

The Mystery of the Church

Chapter one (articles 1-8) is concerned with 'The Mystery of the Church', the use of the biblical term 'mystery' being intended to elucidate the true, complex nature of the Church in all its aspects, both as a visible institution and as an inner spiritual reality.[3] The Council taught that:

> Christ is the light of humanity; and it is, accordingly, the heart-felt desire of this sacred Council, being gathered together in the Holy Spirit, that by proclaiming His Gospel to every creature (cf. Mk. 16:15), it may bring all men to the light of Christ which shines out visibly from the Church. Since the Church, in Christ, is in the nature of a sacrament—a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men—she here purposes ... to set forth ... her own nature and universal mission. (*LG* 1)

The Church, then, manifests Christ as the light of the nations;[4] or more theologically, the Church is the 'universal sacrament of salvation'. (*LG* 48) Through the sacrament[5] of the Church, intimate union with God and the intimate unity of the whole of humanity is achieved. Article 3 teaches that Christ founded the Church and stresses the saving effect of the Eucharist.[6] But the stress on Christ is counter-balanced by reference to Pentecost and the work of the Holy Spirit, who bestows

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[3] Cf. A Grillmeier, 'The Mystery of the Church' in H Vorgrimler (ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Burns & Oates, London 1967, vol. 1, p. 138.

[4] The words *Lumen gentium* are taken from Pope John XXIII's address to the council on 11 September 1962. Wiltgen, pp. 63-4.

[5] Contemporary Catholic theologians tend to equate the Greek *mysterion* with the Latin *sacramentum*. Cf. K Rahner and H Vorgrimler (eds.), *Concise Theological Dictionary*, Burns & Oates, London 1983, pp. 452-3; 73; 323. The notion of the Church as Sacrament was interpreted by Cyprian, Augustine, Aquinas and Scheeben, but only emerged in full clarity in the twentieth century. Cf. A Dulles, *Models of the Church: a Critical Assessment of the Church in all its Aspects*, Gill & Macmillan, Dublin 1989, p. 63.

[6] As in the prayer, *O Sacrum Convivium*: at this sacred banquet in which Christ is received, the memory of His passion is renewed, our lives are filled with grace and a promise of future glory is given to us. See also P McPartlan, *The Eucharist makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue*, T & T Clark, Edinburgh 1993. Nichols notes that Ratzinger was, 'along with Henri de Lubac, one of the first Catholic thinkers to adopt a full-scale, systematic elaborated, "eucharistic ecclesiology".' A Nichols, *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, T & T Clark, Edinburgh 1988, pp. 47-8. See also Y Congar, *The Revelation of God*, DLT, London 1968, p. 173, on the importance of the eucharist in the life of the Church.

upon the Church 'varied hierarchic and charismatic gifts, and in this way directs her ... and leads her into perfect union with her Spouse.' (*LG* 4) Thus the Trinitarian framework for the mystery of the Church is also underscored in a manner that reflects the Trinitarian nature of Revelation, as expressed in the Council's 'Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation', *Dei Verbum*:

> Hence the universal Church is seen to be 'a people brought into unity from the unity, of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.' (*LG* 4)

Article 5 treats of the Kingdom of God and the Church. The first point made is that the Kingdom was present in the person, works and preaching of Jesus. Second, the Church must continue Jesus' work by proclaiming the Kingdom, and third, this work will only be accomplished once the Kingdom is established in its fullness on earth. In other words, the Church, when acting in Christ brings about the realisation of His reign on earth.[7]

The idea of the Church as a mystery is expressed, in St Paul's phrase, as the 'Body of Christ' (*LG* 7), and is developed in two stages. First, the Church is described as a 'body', i.e. an organic unity. One becomes a member of this body through baptism, in which one participates in Christ's death and resurrection. Once a member of the body, one is nourished through the eucharist: 'In this way all of us are made members of his body (cf. 1 Cor. 12:27) [and] ... members one of another (Rom. 12:4).' (*LG* 7) That said, there is a legitimate diversity within the one body, each member having different (but equally valuable) roles to play. Should either the unity or diversity be harmed, however, the whole body will be damaged; its individual members must accept responsibilities, but must not abuse their freedoms.[8] Second, Christ is described as the head of the body, and it is to Him that the rest of the body is to conform. In this, the body is aided by Christ and the Holy Spirit (who animates the body), who impart graces, divine assistance, to it. The relationship between head and body, however, is not impersonal, but rather, 'Christ loves the Church as his bride.' (*LG* 7)

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[7] Thus there is the possibility of ascribing to the Church what may be said of the Kingdom.

[8] This is frequently referred to as 'unity in diversity'. For a discussion of this see A Nichols, *The Shape of Catholic Theology: An Introduction to its Sources, Principles, and History*, T & T Clark: Edinburgh 1991, pp. 349-55.

Article 8 then takes up the title of the whole chapter, presenting the Church in its reality as mystery, in its sacramental structure.[9] It is emphasized that as well as being a 'visible society', the Church is also a 'spiritual community'. These are 'not to be thought of as two realities. On the contrary, they form one complex reality which comes together from a human and a divine element.' (*LG* 8)[10]

Although the full reality of the Church is not completely visible on earth, it should not be assumed, however, that it cannot be identified:

> This is the sole Church of Christ which in the creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic, which our Saviour after His resurrection, entrusted to Peter's pastoral care (Jn. 21:17). (*LG* 8)

The text does not, however, simply identify the Church of Christ with the Roman Catholic Church:

> This Church, constituted and organised as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him. (*LG* 8)

This statement does not obscure the visibility of the Church, but merely acknowledges that 'many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside its visible confines.' (*LG* 8)

Thus the Church is called to follow in the footsteps of Jesus 'if she is to communicate the fruits of salvation to men.' (*LG* 8) Accordingly, she is to reject triumphalism[11] and is to serve the poor in the humility that characterised Jesus' ministry. Furthermore, although Christ, the head of the Church, is sinless, the Church herself 'at once holy and in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal.' (*LG* 8) This sinfulness is due to the Church being realised in sinful men.[12]

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[9] Grillmeier, p. 146.

[10] Cf. Dulles, *Models of the Church*, p. 63.

[11] Cf. the now famous remarks of Bishop Emile De Smedt of Bruges that the Church should reject clericalism, juridicism and triumphalism. Vorgrimler, I, p. 109.

[12] Cf. J Ratzinger and V Messori, *The Ratzinger Report: an Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1986, pp. 50-3.

Although this sin can sometimes damage the luminosity of the Church as the sign of salvation, the preservation of the Church is guaranteed by Christ. That said, the faithful are constantly being called to repentance and renewal. Christ will also protect His Church from persecution 'so that she may reveal in the world, faithfully, however darkly, the mystery of the Lord until, in the consummation, it shall be manifested in full light.' (*LG* 8)[13]

The hierarchical structure of the Church

The third chapter of *Lumen Gentium* (articles 18-29) is concerned with the 'Hierarchical Structure of the Church, with Special Reference to the Episcopate'.

Articles 18-21 deal with the New Testament basis for the existence of bishops. Article 18 states that Christ established a variety of offices in the Church, so that good order might be maintained, thus helping the members of the Church attain salvation.[14] It states that the holders of these offices are 'invested with sacred power' (*LG* 18), the biblical foundation for this view being provided in article 19:

> The Lord Jesus ... called to Himself those whom He willed and appointed twelve to be with Him, whom He might send to preach the kingdom of God (cf. Mk. 3:13-19; Mt. 10:1-42). These apostles (cf. Lk. 6:13) He constituted in the form of a college or permanent assembly, at the head of which he placed Peter, chosen from amongst them (cf. Jn. 21:15-17). (*LG* 19)

The apostles, having received their mission from Jesus, a 'sharing in his power' (*LG* 19), received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, not just as a confirmation of their office, but as another constitutive element of it.[15] Following this, they carried out their mission to preach the Gospel everywhere, which resulted in 'gather[ing] together the universal Church' (*LG* 19), of which Christ is the cornerstone. 'Since the Gospel, which they were charged to hand on, is, for the Church, the principle of all its

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[13] Cf. *Dei Verbum* 4, which highlights the eschatological nature of Christianity.

[14] A Nichols, *Holy Order: Apostolic Priesthood from the New Testament to the Second Vatican Council*, Veritas, Dublin 1990, pp. 5-34.

[15] K Rahner, 'The Hierarchical Structure of the Church with Special Reference to the Episcopate' in Vorgrimler, I, p. 189.

life for all time' (*LG* 20), the mission of the apostles is to last until the end of the world. Hence the apostles appointed successors, i.e. bishops. Thus, *Lumen Gentium* teaches that 'the bishops have by divine institution taken the place of the apostles as pastors of the Church.' (*LG* 20)[16]

Next, article 21 discusses the nature of the office of bishop in general and the sacramental reality on which all its functions are based:

> In the person of the bishops ... the Lord Jesus Christ, supreme high priest, is present in the midst of the faithful ... through their signal service ... He preaches the word of God to all peoples and administers without cease to the faithful the sacraments of faith. (*LG* 21)

In order that they might fulfil so special a role, the apostles were graced with a special out-pouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The gift of the Spirit was, and is, transmitted by the laying on of hands in episcopal consecration, in which the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders is conferred. By this consecration, the offices of sanctifying, teaching and ruling are also bestowed, and the bishop therefore participates ontologically in Christ's threefold office of Priest, Prophet, and King, acting as His representative. The offices of teaching and governing, however, can only be exercised in unity with the episcopal college and its head.

Further, the council taught that there exists, 'in accordance with the Lord's decree' (*LG* 22) a college of bishops (known also as 'body' or 'order' of bishops) that is the direct successor of the apostolic college. These colleges are united under their heads, i.e. St Peter and his successor. The doctrine of collegiality is then enunciated:

> The college or body of bishops has, for all that, no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, as its head, whose primatial authority, let it be added, over all, whether pastors or faithful, remains in its integrity. For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, namely, and as pastor of the entire Church, has full, supreme and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered. The order of bishops is the successor to the college of the apostles in their role as teachers and pastors, and in it the apostolic college is perpetuated. Together with their head, the Supreme Pontiff, and never apart from him, they

[16] Cf. *Dei Verbum* 7.

> have supreme and full authority over the universal Church; but this power cannot be exercised without the agreement of the Roman Pontiff. (*LG* 22)

So the college exists only when united to the Pope, and one may not distinguish between the college and the Pope, but only between the college with the Pope at its head and the Pope alone. 'The college of bishops, thus understood, is the possessor of supreme and full authority over the whole Church.'[17] This power, however, is not bestowed on the college by the Pope, and the Pope's assent to a decision of the college is not something imposed from outside. It is, rather, an intrinsic part of the collegial act itself.[18] Furthermore, some restriction is also imposed upon the Pope, since he cannot act as a private person in such matters. He must always act as the visible head of the Church, which he is 'only when he is a member of the Church, living in its Spirit and from the institution as a whole. If he has to act as visible head of the Church, then he has to act as head of the college. Hence the collegiate possessor of supreme power in the Church is strictly one but has two modes of action, in keeping with its intrinsic structure through the Pope 'alone' as its primatial head, and through the college acting strictly as such.'[19]

The bishops have a function with regard to their own local Churches and to the Church as a whole, but in accordance with the doctrine of collegiality, it is taught that an ecumenical council must receive confirmation from the Pope, an intrinsic, constitutive element of the council itself.

Article 23 deals with the relationships between a bishop and the whole Church, his own local Church and other local Churches. These relationships are based in collegiality:

> The Roman Pontiff, as the successor of Peter, is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful. The individual bishops are the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular Churches, which are constituted after the model of the universal Church; it is in these and formed out of them that the one and unique Catholic Church exists.

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[17] Rahner, p. 200.
[18] Rahner, p. 200.
[19] Rahner, p. 204.

> And for that reason precisely, each bishop represents his own Church, whereas all, together with the Pope, represent the whole Church in a bond of peace, love and unity. (*LG* 23)

The one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, therefore, is present in its entirety in each validly constituted local Church under its bishop. It follows, then, that the universal Church is not the sum total of all the local Churches; it is, rather, a communion of them.[20] In these local Churches, the individual bishop exercises power only in respect of his own Church, not over other local Churches or the Church as a whole. He is, however, required to do this in a way that is not detrimental to the well-being of the whole Church, since this will, in fact, build up the entire Church. All the bishops, therefore, should join with each other and the Pope in missionary work and 'should gladly extend their fraternal assistance, in the fellowship of an all pervading charity, to other Churches, especially to neighbouring ones and to those most in need of help.' (*LG* 23)

The first section of article 25 discusses the teaching (prophetical) office of the individual bishop. The bishop is endowed with the authority of Christ for this function, in which teaching is equated with preaching the Gospel. The faithful are expected to submit their will and intellect to this teaching, although they are not required to give the assent of faith, since a bishop's teaching need not be restricted explicitly to dogma: it covers all issues of theology and Church life. It is stressed that this submission is due in a special way to the teachings of the Pope, even when not speaking *ex cathedra*. This teaching may be delivered through various channels, and these dictate the level of assent required. In certain cases, 'obedient silence' may be sufficient.[21]

The second section deals with the teaching authority of the college of bishops, which in certain circumstances is infallible.[22] This infallibility is exactly the same as that of the Pope, and must be exercised

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[20] The term 'communion' is based on the Greek New Testament word *koinonia*, 'which refers to the sharing or fellowship of human beings with God and one another in Christ through the Spirit, especially as expressed in the reception of Holy Communion.' E. Yarnold, 'The Church as Communion' in the *Tablet*, vol. 246, no. 7949, p. 1564. As such, theologians must be careful not to interpret communion in merely sociological terms. See also J-M R Tillard, *Church of Churches: The Ecclesiology of Communion*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota 1992.

[21] Rahner, p. 209. See also K Rahner, *Theological Investigations Volume 14: Ecclesiology, Questions in the Church, The Church in the World*, DLT, London, 1976, pp. 85-97.

[22] On the basis of this teaching, G. Sweeney has argued that the views of the minority at Vatican I, 'which may not have received the accolade of dogmatic definition ... are nevertheless authentic

in the same manner, subject to the same limitations. Following on from article 22, it is clear that any infallible pronouncement must be a collegial act. The third and fourth sections of article 25 deal with the nature of infallible teaching, and are cited in full:

> This infallibility, however, with which the Divine Redeemer wished to endow His Church in defining doctrines pertaining to faith and morals, is coextensive with the deposit of Revelation, which must be religiously guarded and loyally and courageously expounded. The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful who confirms his brethren in the faith (cf. Lk. 22:32) he proclaims in an absolute decision a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals. For that reason his definitions are rightly said to be irreformable by their very nature and not by reason of the assent of the Church, in as much as they were made with the assistance of the Holy Spirit promised to him in the person of blessed Peter himself; and as a consequence they are in no way in need of the approval of others, and do not admit of appeal to any other tribunal. For in such a case the Roman Pontiff does not utter a pronouncement as a private person, but rather does he expound and defend the teaching of the Catholic faith as the supreme teacher of the universal Church, in whom the Church's charism [gift] of infallibility is present in a singular way. The infallibility promised to the Church is also present in the body of bishops when, together with Peter's successor, they exercise the supreme teaching office. Now, the assent of the Church can never be lacking to such definitions on account of the same Holy Spirit's influence, through which Christ's whole flock is maintained in the unity of the faith and makes progress in it. Furthermore, when the Roman Pontiff, or the body of bishops together with him, define a doctrine, they make the definition in conformity with Revelation itself, to which all are bound to adhere and to which they are obliged to submit; and this Revelation is transmitted integrally either in written form or in oral tradition through the legitimate succession of

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expressions of faith and [are] necessary to an understanding of those formulae which were finally put to the vote.' 'The forgotten council' in A Hastings (ed.), *Bishops and Writers: Aspects of the Evolution of Modern English Catholicism*, Anthony Clarke, Wheathampstead 1977, pp. 161–2.

> bishops and above all through the watchful concern of the Roman Pontiff himself; and through the light of the Spirit of truth it is scrupulously preserved in the Church and unerringly explained. The Roman Pontiff and the bishops, by reason of their office and the seriousness of the matter, apply themselves with zeal to the work of inquiring by every suitable means into this Revelation and of giving apt expression to its contents; they do not, however, admit any new public Revelation as pertaining to the divine deposit of faith. (*LG* 25)

In accordance with *Dei Verbum* it is explicitly stated, that the gift of infallibility is not a means by which the Church can add to Revelation. It is, rather, an assistance in clarifying that Revelation, which was given once and for all, and which is complete in Christ.[23] Essentially it is a negative assistance, which prevents the Church falling into serious error when teaching about matters essential to salvation.

Article 26 discusses the priestly office of a bishop. In accordance with article 23 it is stated that: 'In each altar community, under the sacred ministry of the bishop, a manifest symbol is to be seen of that charity and "unity of the mystical body, without which there can be no salvation"' (*LG* 26) and in the sacramental life of each local Church the bishop is the priestly superior. Among his duties are the formation of the liturgy and regulation of the discipline of penance.

Next, the regal office of the bishop is discussed in article 27. Here it is expressly stated that bishops are not 'to be regarded as vicars of the Roman Pontiff; for they exercise the power which they possess in their own right and are called in the truest sense of the term prelates of the people whom they govern.' His power is therefore 'proper, ordinary and immediate.' (*LG* 27) Thus the bishop has personal responsibility for

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[23] Rahner, p. 213 comments: 'The "irreformable" nature of the definition clearly excludes only error in faith. It does not affirm that the dogmatic definition is necessarily opportune in all respects, or that it corresponds fully to the justifiable demands of the mentality of a given age, or that it may not be replaced later by a better definition. The development of dogma does not blot out the past history of the faith of the Church, and yet it is never simply closed. In this sense, it is always "reformable".' While the limitations of dogmatic definitions which Rahner outlines are broadly in agreement with the provisions of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith document on the historical and cultural conditioning of doctrine, *Mysterium ecclesiae* (1973), it does, however, seem strange to speak of an "irreformable" definition as being "reformable". It is necessary to emphasise that irreformable definitions do signify truth in a determinate way.

his own local Church, which he rules in the name of Christ, through the divinely instituted office of bishop.[24] The text stresses, however, that his is a ministry of service, and that as well as teaching and commanding, a bishop must also listen to his flock. He should also pay particular regard to missionary and ecumenical work, and charity.

Priests (article 28) and deacons (article 29) also share in the three offices of Christ, but deacons do not share in it to the same degree as priests, who, in turn, do not possess it in the fullness that the bishops do. In other words, one can come to a fuller participation in the threefold office through ordination, especially episcopal ordination.

The laity

Chapter four (articles 30–38) then treats of the 'Laity', that is those who are not ordained but who 'by Baptism are incorporated into Christ, are placed in the People of God, and in their own way share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ.' (*LG* 31) Thus they too share in the authority Christ has entrusted to His Church:

> By reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will. (*LG* 31)

Furthermore, the council taught that all are one in Christ and that although there are many different roles to be performed in the Church:

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[24] At this point the question arises as to how this authority is to be reconciled with the primacy of the Pope, who in the 'Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church', *Christus Dominus*, is said to have been 'granted by God supreme, full, immediate and universal power in the care of souls ... He is therefore endowed with the primacy of ordinary power over all the churches.' (*CD* 2) As Tillard has said, it may appear that there are 'two concurrent powers'. J-M R Tillard, *The Bishop of Rome*, SPCK, London 1983, p. 128. This, however, is not the case, as was pointed out at Vatican I by Bishop Gasser, who noted that the proper occasion for the use of the papal prerogative was when there was an issue of faith, disagreement or heresy in a part of the Church with which the local bishops were unable to deal, either individually or by means of a local council. An appeal to the Holy See would then be a matter of the last resort and the power, which the Pope could then invoke, would be a 'special privilege'. Sweeney, p. 164. Such a view was accepted by the members of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission in 'Authority in the Church II' paragraphs 16–22, *The Final Report*, CTS and SPCK, London 1982, pp. 88–91.

> there remains, nevertheless, a true equality between all with regard to the dignity and to the activity which is common to all the faithful in building up of the Body of Christ. (*LG* 32)

Article 33 deals with the nature and sources of the layman's apostolic vocation and his apostolic life:

> The apostolate of the laity is a sharing in the saving mission of the Church. Through baptism and confirmation all are appointed to this apostolate by the Lord Himself. Moreover, by the sacraments, and especially by the eucharist, that love of God and man which is the soul of the apostolate is communicated and nourished. The laity, however, are given a special vocation: to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth. Thus, every lay person, through those gifts given to him, is at once the witness and the living instrument of the mission of the Church itself 'according to the measure of Christ's bestowal' (Eph. 4:7). (*LG* 33)

Thus the sacraments of baptism and confirmation form the foundation for a general Christian apostolate in which the laity shares. Moreover, through these sacraments, the laity participates in Christ's threefold office of Prophet, Priest and King.[25] Obviously there is a link with the Church as a whole and the text makes it clear that the laity takes part in the mission of the entire Church. As well as their mission in the world, lay people also have 'the capacity of being appointed by the hierarchy to some ecclesiastical offices with a view to a spiritual end.'[26] (*LG* 33) The chapter ends with a Christological definition of the Christian layman:

> Each individual layman must be a witness before the world to the resurrection and the life of the Lord Jesus, and a sign of the living God. All together, and each one to the best of his ability, must nourish the world with spiritual fruits (cf. Gal. 5:22). They must diffuse in the world the spirit which animates those

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[25] This concept is central to John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* on the 'Vocation and Mission of Lay People in the Church and in the World Twenty Years after the Second Vatican Council' (1988).

[26] See the discussion in A Dulles, *The Resilient Church: The Necessity and Limits of Adaptation*, Gill & Macmillan: Dublin 1978, pp. 96-110.

> poor, meek and peacemakers whom the Lord in the Gospel proclaimed blessed (cf. Mt. 5:3-9). In a word: 'what the soul is in the body, let Christians be in the world.' (*LG* 38)

Conclusion

The Church, then, is a mystery, which one becomes part of through baptism. It is both a visible institution governed by bishops and also an inner spiritual reality animated by the Holy Spirit, building up on earth the Kingdom of God, in its role as the universal sacrament of salvation. The Church was founded by Christ and shares in His Priestly, Prophetical and Regal Offices, which are exercised in due measure by all of the faithful. The Roman Pontiff (the Pope) is the prime governor of the Church, but he shares his authority with the bishops in accordance with the doctrine of collegiality, the operation of which is most clearly seen in ecumenical councils, such as Vatican II. In certain circumstances the Pope, either alone (but as head of the college of bishops) or acting in union with the bishops, in matters pertaining to faith and morals, exercises the gift of infallibility with which Christ endowed His Church. This gift does not amount to divine inspiration, but is a negative assistance, which prevents the Church falling into serious error in teaching about matters necessary to be believed for salvation.

AUTHORITY FROM A SHIᶜITE PERSPECTIVE

Muhammad Legenhausen

Authority and *Wilāyah*

There are various sorts of authority. Teachers have authority over their students. Employers have authority over their employees. Parents have authority over their children. None of these sorts of authority are absolute. Parents do not have authority to abuse their children. Authority is not mere liberty to command. The limits on authority are especially pronounced in Islam. All authority belongs ultimately to God, and different people exercise specific types of authority according to the responsibilities given to them. One who exercises authority may be required to use personal discretion, but discretion is always to be employed in order to carry out one's duties in the best possible way, and does not imply that one has a free hand to do whatever one wants.

If there is any absolute authority, it is the authority of God. Here, however, there is a difference between Shiᶜite and Ashᶜarite views. Most Sunnite theologians accept an Ashᶜarite position, according to which all moral obligation derives from divine commands, and that since it does not make sense to speak of God commanding Himself, He is not constrained by any moral obligations. It would not be wrong for Him to command murder and stealing, but rather, if He commanded them, they would become morally obligatory. Shiᶜites, on the other hand, along with the Muᶜtazilites, hold that what we know by reason to be wrong could never be commanded by God. The Ashᶜarites object that this seems to imply that reason—or the absolute moral values discerned by reason—has an authority above the authority of God. Heaven forbid! Shiᶜites respond that this is a misunderstanding of the nature of authority. God cannot command what is wrong because He is essentially just, not because He is subservient to justice or reason, or because He lacks sufficient power

to be unjust. God has absolute authority, not in the sense that He could command what is wrong, but that He does whatever He wills, and He necessarily wills what is just and what is better than justice, e.g., grace, because He is essentially just and merciful. The God of Abraham, Noah, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (peace be with him and his progeny and with them all) is no Pater Liber.[1]

The absolute authority of God does not mean that God is at liberty to do evil, but neither does it imply that He is not at liberty. Likewise, the expertise of a craftsman does not mean that if the craftsman were to produce something unbefitting his skill, then he has the authority to do so because of his expertise. Neither does it imply that the craftsman who exercises his skill is not at liberty to make what he wants. God does whatever He wills, but His will is not arbitrary. God does whatever He wills, but His willing is never evil, because this would contradict His essence.

In Shi'ite sources, there is no general term for authority as it occurs in Western languages, used for the concepts of divine authority, scriptural authority, church authority, etc. Occasionally, one who has the power of command is referred to by the word *sulṭān* (from which comes the English 'sultan'), *malik* (sovereign), *mālik* (owner, possessor), and *ḥujjah* (proof). Among the Names of God mentioned in the Qur'ān, we find *al-Malik* (20: 114), and *Mālik al-Mulk* (which has been translated as 'Master of the Kingdom', 'Owner of All', and 'Master of all sovereignty'). There are no divine Names based on the roots of *sulṭān* or *ḥujjah*, although reference to divine authority can be found in which such terms are employed. Other terms that are used to indicate divine authority are: *al-Ḥaqq* (the Truth), *al-Rabb* (Lord), *Dhū al-Jalāl* (Possessor of Majesty), and a number of others, each of which repays study with a greater appreciation of the nature of divine authority in Islam. The notion of authority is closely related to that of obedience; so, we should also look at what the Qur'ān has to say about obedience and following in order to get a clearer picture of how authority is viewed in Islam.

Let us begin with *sulṭān*. What is most characteristic of the use of this word in the Qur'ān is that it is used to condemn idolatry as unauthorized, in contrast to which the missions of the prophets are described as authorized.

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[1] *Pater Liber* is one of the Roman gods who came to be identified with Dionysus, or Bacchus, the god of licentiousness and drunkenness.

The following verses may be grouped together because they all pertain to the condemnation of unauthorized idolatry [which is contrasted with the authorized message of monotheism *(tawḥīd)* brought through the prophets]. We could say that these verses indicate a negative concept of authority, in that they deny authority for idolatry. These verses are relevant to teaching authority, for they condemn false unauthorized religious teachings, and to sacramental authority, for they condemn unauthorized worship of false gods.

> We shall cast terror into the hearts of the faithless because of their ascribing to Allah partners for which He has not sent down any authority, and their refuge shall be the Fire; and evil is the abode of the wrongdoers. (3: 151)
>
> How could I [Abraham] fear what you ascribe as partners, when you do not fear ascribing to Allah partners for which He has not sent down any authority to you? (6: 81)
>
> Say, 'My Lord has only forbidden indecencies ... and that you should ascribe to Allah partners for which He has not sent down any authority... (7: 33)
>
> ... Do you dispute with me regarding names that you have named—you and your fathers—for which Allah has not sent down any authority? (7: 71), similar to (53: 23).
>
> You do not worship besides Him but names that you and your fathers have coined for which Allah has not sent down any authority. Sovereignty belongs only to Allah ... (12: 40)
>
> ... if only they would bring some clear authority concerning them [gods besides Him] ... (18: 15)
>
> Have We sent down to them any authority which might speak of what they associate with Him? (30: 35)
>
> They worship besides Allah that for which He has not sent down any authority, and of which they have no knowledge ... (22: 71)

The link between authority and knowledge is important. Those without legitimate authority do not know what they are talking about. This

would seem to indicate a lack of teaching authority, since the reference to eavesdropping indicates that those condemned lack knowledge on which to base their pronouncements. They are ridiculed by God in the following verse:

> Or do they have a ladder whereby they eavesdrop? If so let their eavesdropper produce a manifest authority. (52: 38)

No one becomes privy to the divine knowledge by illegitimate means:

> You can pass through the confines of the heavens and the earth, then do pass through. But you will not pass through except by an authority. (55: 33)

Likewise, the attribution of polytheistic doctrines about God is declared to be unauthorized and not based on any knowledge.

> They say, 'Allah has taken a son!' Immaculate is He! To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. You have no authority for this. Do you attribute to Allah what you do not know? (10: 68)

This verse has figured prominently in theological disputes between Christians and Muslims, but the point is general, and asserted in much the same way against polytheists who held that the angels were the daughters of God. Christians respond that they do not hold that the second person of the Trinity is a son in the sense condemned in the above verse. However, this is not the place to review the history of *that* discussion. What is at issue here is that improper religious beliefs are condemned as being taught without authority; and once again, it is primarily teaching authority that is at issue, and those condemned for unauthorized teaching are condemned for making attributions without knowledge.

> Do you have a manifest authority? (37: 156) [asked of those who hold that Allah has begotten daughters]

> Indeed those who dispute the signs of Allah without any authority that may have come to them—there is only vanity in their breasts, which they will never satisfy ... (40: 56)

Next we have verses that declare the divine authorization of the prophets, for whom Moses (*'a*) stands as an exemplar. These verses indicate a positive concept of authority, the divine authorization given to the prophets. Here, the authority is not limited to teaching, but has legal and political dimensions, as well.

> ... and We gave Moses a manifest authority. (4: 153)
>
> Certainly We sent Moses with Our signs and a manifest authority/ to Pharaoh and his elite, but they followed Pharaoh's dictates, and Pharaoh's dictates were not right. (11: 96-97)
>
> Then We sent Moses and Aaron, his brother, with Our signs and a manifest authority ... (23: 45).

This is similar to (28: 35), just Moses is mentioned with the signs and manifest authority at (40: 23), (51: 38). Moses tells Pharaoh that he has a manifest authority from God at (44: 19), where opposition to freeing (giving over to Moses) the Israelites, 'the servants of God', is considered rebellion against God. So, the authority given by God to the prophets is over whoever God wishes, and is not confined to the prophet himself or his people. Moses has *de jure* authority over Pharaoh, even if Pharaoh refuses to recognize it.

> ... but Allah gives authority to His apostles over whomsoever He wishes (59: 6)

While various people challenge the authority of the prophets, the prophets acknowledge that whatever authority they bring is only by the permission of God. Here the authority may be indicated in the form of a miracle, or sign indicative of their mission.

> ... They said, 'You are nothing but humans like us who desire to bar us from what our fathers used to worship. So bring us a manifest authority.'/ Their apostles said to them, 'Indeed we are just human beings like yourselves, but Allah favors whomever of His servants He wishes. We may not bring you an authority except by Allah's leave, and in Allah let all the faithful put their trust.' (14: 10-11)

Another important instance of negative authority, or authority denied, is the case of Iblīs, or Satan. What is denied here is not specifically teaching

authority, but a quasi-political/legal right to rule over or command.

> As for My servants, you [Satan] shall have no authority over them. (17: 65)

> ... Satan will say, 'Indeed Allah made you a promise that was true and I made you a promise, but I failed you. I had no authority over you, except that I called you and you responded to me ... (14: 22)

Just as Satan admits that he had no legitimate authority over man, the idols will testify against their worshippers at the end of the world:

> ... we [what wrongdoers used to worship] had no authority over you; no, you were an insolent people ... (37: 30)

Satan does exert a sort of *de facto* authority over man, as is indicated by the words (I called you and you responded to me), but this is not a legitimate form of authority. It merely means that Satan is obeyed by men. We see the same distinction in the following verses.

> Indeed as for My servants, you [Iblis] do not have any authority over them, except the perverse who follow you. (15: 42)

> Indeed he [Satan] does not have any authority over those who have faith and put their trust in their Lord./ His authority is only over those who befriend him and those who make him a partner [of Allah]. (16: 99-100)

The possibility of *de facto* Satanic authority is the result of the free will granted to human beings. Satan is able to tempt:

> He [Iblis] had no authority over them, but that We may ascertain those who believe in the Hereafter from those who are in doubt about it ... (34: 21)

Often the believers have been protected by God from the *de facto* authority of tyrants:

> ... had Allah wished, He would have given them authority

> against you, and then they would surely have fought you. (4: 90)

There is a recurrent association of tyranny and the illegitimate exercise of authority, the taking up of idols, the failure to follow the prophets, and disputing religious tenets without divine authority.

> Those who dispute the signs of Allah without any authority that may have come to them—[that is] greatly outrageous to Allah and to those who have faith. That is how Allah seals the heart of every arrogant tyrant. (40: 35)

Authority often has the sense of permission. The signs brought by the prophets are by the permission of God. The religious/legal permission to take retribution for murder is also described as an authority.

> ... and whoever is killed wrongfully, We have certainly given his heir an authority. (17: 33)

Likewise permission for self-defence against hostile idolaters is described as an authority, perhaps better translated in this case and the above as authorization. The authorization here pertains to what is to be considered lawful, not to teaching, spirituality, or worship.

> ... and it is such against whom We have given you a clear authorization. (4: 91)

When the hoopoe doesn't show up on time for Solomon, he says:

> I will surely punish him with a severe punishment, or I will surely behead him, unless he brings a clear authority. (27: 21)

The meaning of 'authority' here is also that of an *authorization* or *excuse*. When one has no excuse left to offer, one is said to lack authority:

> My authority has departed from me (69: 29) spoken by the sinners who are given their books in their left hands on the judgment day and have no legal excuse on the basis of which to seek to avoid punishment.

Treachery is seen as an invitation to disaster, as if one were giving permission to God to make one wretched. Of course, God does not *need* the permission of humans for anything; yet by failing to carry out the conditions needed for being granted a reward, it is as though one gives permission to the authority not to grant the reward.

> O you who have faith! Do not take the faithless for friends instead of the faithful. Do you wish to give Allah a clear authorization against yourselves? (4: 144)

Every believer seeks divine guidance, and so seeks an authority from God. Divine authority is associated more with divine authorization, assistance, signs and guidance than with having free reign or liberty to rule. Here the authority mentioned is more clearly associated with spiritual guidance than those previously mentioned.

> And say, 'My Lord! Admit me with a worthy entrance, and bring me out with a worthy departure, and make for me a helping authority from Yourself.' (17: 80)

The examination of these verses and the reflections above enable us to reach the following conclusions about the concept of authority in Islam.

1. Divine authority is beneficial. What God commands is for the good of those commanded. Because of this, practical reason is understood to endorse obedience to the divine commands.
2. Divine authority is always presented in contrast to usurped authority or deceitful authority, which is arbitrary, selfish, and of no real benefit, although appearances to the contrary commonly deceive many.
3. Divine authority is guiding, while *de facto* authority without divine permission is oppressive and misleading.
4. Authority is backed up by signs, by reason, and by knowledge. It is linked to proof *(hujjah)* and clear explanation *(bayyinah)*. The recognition of authority is by appeal to individual conscience and reason. No one can be forced to recognize the divine authority given to the prophets.
5. The divine authority given to human beings is limited. For example, one is permitted retribution, but one must not be excessive in this. Divine authority cannot be abused because it is conditioned on proper exercise. As soon as one acts abusively, one forfeits any claim to divine authority. No one can claim divine authority for oppression.

6. The divine authority given to the prophets is not divided. Through them, divine guidance is provided in all areas of life: legal, spiritual, sacramental, teaching, political, etc. For example, rules of good hygiene are woven into the rules of ritual practice; moral teachings are not separated from religious law; and spirituality informs the political decisions of the prophets. On the other hand, authority delegated to others is limited to specific authorizations, e.g., retribution.
7. Authority is authorization. One has authorization for what has a good reason, for what excuses one, for what one has been given explicit divine permission, and for what has been divinely commanded.

Our examination of the above verses suffices to establish that the source of authority in Islam is God. This is not surprising. God's authority, however, is not arbitrary. God does whatever He wishes, but His wishes are not capricious. This point is one on which Shi'ite theology differs with the Ash'arite theology that is common among Sunni Islam.

The above verses also contain a principle by which authority is transmitted: by authorization. God delegates authority to the prophets, peace be with them.

The difference between Shi'ite and Sunni accounts of the succession to the Prophet is often portrayed as a political dispute. This is misleading. There *is* a dispute about the political leadership of the Muslim community, but this is secondary to a more fundamental disagreement about authorization. According to the Shi'ah, the ultimate basis of authority is not what anyone wants—neither the will of the people, nor anyone else. Even the will of God only can be considered the source of authority because of God's essential justice and mercy. Of course, authority is granted by God's will, but it is not because God wills capriciously for the prophets to have authority that they have it; rather, God wills that the prophets have their authority because of His wisdom and mercy, and the prophets' capacity to provide guidance. He chooses whoever He wills in accordance with His wise and beneficent plan for humanity.

God wills justice, for He is just. Justice means that everything should be in its proper place. Those who require guidance should obey those who can best provide it. Thus, God sends His messengers with authority to provide guidance that will enable those who obey them to order their relations with God and men, acquire virtue and thereby move toward Him.

Likewise, the succession to the Prophet through the Imams is neither determined by heredity nor by the arbitrary selection of the previous authority, but through divine selection announced through the appointment of each of the Imams by the one who held the authority prior to him.

The Prophet Muhammad was authorized by Allah to bring a law for the people that differed in some respects from what was current among the Christians and Jews of the time, although there were many points in common among them. The successors of the Prophet were not authorized to bring any other law. In this sense there is a difference in the legal authority given to the prophets and to the Imams. Both are given authority in the sense of authorization to guide the people, with a right to obedience from the people, not for their own sakes, but in order to fulfil the divine mandate. However, the law promulgated by the Imams is the law that had been given to Muhammad, and the scripture they taught was the scripture given to Muhammad.

The authority given to both the prophets and Imams to guide the people and which requires obedience is called *wilāyah*. *Wilāyah* is a special friendship with God, which is usually translated into English as *sainthood*, but the *walīy* in Shi'ism is not understood as the *saint* in Catholicism. Sometimes *wilāyah* and *walāyah* are distinguished, so that the former means the guardianship and right to obedience that characterizes the relation of the *mawlā* over his followers, while the latter is used to characterize the special friendship and devotion to God of the *walīy Allah*, as well as the love and devotion of the people toward him. Shaykh Saduq tells us that the most noble servants of Allah are those whose *walīy* is the *walīy Allah* and whose enemy is the enemy of Allah.[2] In practice the terms are often confused, and the markings that would distinguish the words *wilāyah* and *walāyah* are often omitted in Arabic texts.

Like the Catholic saint, the *walīy* is a very holy person, one who has an especially intimate relation with God expressed as love and devotion. However, the *walīy* also takes the utmost care to follow the path prescribed toward God through the guidance given by His Prophet, and because of his success in following the way toward God, he becomes the means through which God guides others to Himself, too, and thus God grants him the right to leadership and to the obedience of the people.

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[2] Muhammad ibn Babawayh al-Qummi, *A Shi'ite Creed*, tr. Asaf A A Fyzee, WOFIS, Tehran, 1982, pp. 85-86.

One of the most important narrations on which the authority of Imam 'Alī is based is that of Ghadīr, according to which the Prophet appointed 'Alī as his successor after the farewell pilgrimage. It is reported that he brought 'Alī before the people, raised 'Ali's hand in his own and said: 'For whomever I am *mawlā*, this ('Alī) is his *walīy*. O Allah, befriend those who befriend him and have enmity for those who have enmity toward him.'[3]

An early claim to authority that invokes the concept of *wilāyah* may be found in a hadith according to which the grandson of the Prophet, Imam Husayn, is reported to have written the following in a letter to the Shī'ah of Basra:

> God has chosen Muhammad from among his people, graced him with His prophethood and selected him for His message. After he admonished the people and conveyed His message to them, God took him back unto Himself. We, being his family *(ahl)*, his devotees *(awlīyā)*, his trustees, heirs, and legatees, are the most deserving among all the people to take his place.[4]

In this statement it is clear that the sort of authority understood by the Imam to have been given through the appointment of the Prophet includes the authority to command, that is, to provide political leadership to the community, and that this authority is based on spiritual authority through which the Imam guides his followers toward God. Furthermore, the political authority is also rooted in the spiritual authority, for the political direction of the community is not for the sake of merely worldly benefits or by the arbitrary exercise of power, rather, the community is guided politically by the *walīy* so as to provide an appropriate framework for the spiritual perfection of its members. However, the guidance of the community is not only in order to provide this framework for *individual* spiritual perfection. The Muslim community or *ummah* also has a moral and spiritual role to play in the greater community of nations.

The political and spiritual guidance of the community and its members by the Prophet and Imams would not be possible if it were not

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[3] This narration is found in various Shi'ite as well as Sunni collections of hadiths. See Sayyid Muhammad Reza Mudarrisi Yazdi, *Shi'ism in Sunnism*, Ansariyan, Qom, 2003, p. 52.

[4] This narration is reported in Tabari, cited by S H M Jafri in *The Origins and Development of Shi'a Islam*, Ansariyan, Qom, 1989, pp. 179-180.

based on a proper knowledge of the divine will. Because of the possession of this knowledge, the *walīy* has teaching authority.

Authority may be further delegated by the Prophet or Imams to others. For example, although the authority to bring a covenant with God in the form of religious law ends with the Prophet Muhammad, the legal authority to issue rulings based on this law and to interpret how the law is to be applied in new circumstances is delegated to those who have gained the appropriate knowledge of the law and are God-fearing. Likewise, teaching authority is further delegated to those who have the appropriate knowledge and are pious, whether that knowledge be of the law, doctrine, hadiths, the recitation of the Qur'an, its interpretation, etc.

Sacramental authority is a special case that deserves attention given the great differences in this between Catholicism and Islam. There is no priesthood in Islam. There are no sacraments, or special rituals that serve as vehicles for obtaining grace, that require a special person with specific authority to perform them. All of the major sacraments of Islam (if we may be allowed to use the Catholic terminology for them here), that is, bearing witness, prayer, alms, fasting and *hajj*, can be performed by any Muslim with knowledge of the relevant laws without the presence of the clergy (although leading prayers requires both knowledge of the ritual and justice). There is no power or authority invested in any person by any Muslim religious institution for the performance of any ritual or for the issuing of any decree of Islamic law or for the statement of doctrine. Of course, it is an established idea among many Shi'a jurists that in the time of the presence of Imams as well as in the reign of a just jurist, certain positions such as acting as a judge or Friday and Eid prayer leader must be decided by appointment.

To find something analogous to the Catholic notion of religious authority in Islam, we do best to take a glance at the Sufi Orders. According to Sufis, spiritual authority has been passed down through a chain of specific designations, called a *silsilah*, on the basis of which claims are made to spiritual authority. Among both Sunni and Shi'i Sufis, these chains go back to the Prophet through 'Ali. This not only provides the Sufis with a doctrine of spiritual authority derived by appointment or designation, but it also introduces a sort of sacramental authority that is absent from non-Sufi Islam. The Sufis hold that the pledge between the master and disciple, called *bay'ah*, is a vehicle of divine grace or *barakat*, in a manner comparable with Catholic teachings on the sacraments. This

initiatory ceremony must be conducted by the Sufi master or someone appointed by him and the initiate. This provides an approximation to the Catholic idea of a sacrament that also can be found in Islam, although it does not correspond to any particular Catholic sacrament. An even closer approximation in Sufism to a specific Catholic sacrament, that of Holy Orders, may be found in the appointment of a *shaykh* by the Sufi *pīr*, although this is in some ways more like the appointment of a bishop than like the sacrament through which one becomes a Catholic priest. At any rate, even these analogues to Catholic sacraments are only found in Sufi Islam, whether Shi'i or Sunni branches of Sufism. In non-Sufi Shi'i Islam as in non-Sufi Sunni Islam, there is nothing like a sacrament that requires performance by a religious authority.

Sunni and Shi'i theologians differ on the nature of political authority. For the Shi'ah, the *wilāyah* of 'Ali is comprehensive, in the sense that it includes spiritual, teaching, legal and political authority. For Sunni theologians, the *wilāyah* of 'Ali is such that he can be recognized as a spiritual authority, (although his spiritual authority is not comparable with that of the Prophet), but this is held to have no political implications. 'Ali's political authority is limited, in Sunni Islam, to the period of his caliphate. He is recognized as a teaching authority, but only to the extent that he had knowledge of the Qur'ān and the teachings of the Prophet. He is accorded legal authority in Sunni Islam because of this same knowledge. The political authority of the caliphs, according to Sunni Islam, is based on the virtues of the caliph and on his acceptance by the Muslim community. The authority of the Imams in Shi'ite Islam, on the other hand, does not require acceptance by the Muslim community. Their authority is appointed whether anyone recognizes it or not. In theory, there is no significant difference in this regard among the various Shi'i sects. Isma'ili Shi'a, for example, accept the same basic theory of Imamate as the Twelver Shi'a, but differ as to the identity of some of the Imams.

In traditional Sunni Islam, legal authority is confined to four schools of jurisprudence: Hanbali, Hanafi, Maliki, and Shafi'i. Although there are Sunni Muslims who have called for a re-examination of the formulation of Muslim law in these four schools, the traditional opinion has been that the doors to *ijtihād* (the independent deriving of the law from its sources) are closed. In Shi'i Islam, on the other hand, the doors to *ijtihād* have never been closed. For the Shi'ah, legal authority requires not merely a knowledge of the sources, it implicitly also requires the

wisdom to derive rulings on specific issues in changing circumstances. Legal authority to derive such rulings is based solely on knowledge and intelligence (as well as piety), however, and does not require any specific sort of permission, according to the dominant view among the Shi'i *'ulamā'*, called *uṣūlī*. During the Safavid period, there was a debate between *uṣūlī* and *akhbārī* schools of Shi'i jurisprudence; and the *akhbārīs* argued that any sort of religious authority, whether legal or merely for the narration of hadiths, required permission from a previous authority. Although many Shi'i religious authorities continue to receive permission from their teachers or from the seminaries for *ijtihād*, there are notable *mujtahids* who have practised *ijtihād* without obtaining any such permission.

According to Twelver Shi'a, religious authority and *wilāyah* is currently accorded to the Twelfth Imam, who is in a state of *ghaybah*, or occultation. The period of *ghaybah* is divided into two: minor and major. During the minor *ghaybah*, he appointed deputies to attend to various affairs of his followers and to provide guidance on some matters. The period after the death of the last deputy, who acted as an intermediary between the people and the Imam, marks the beginning of the major occultation. So, the question arises as to where religious authority is to be found during the major occultation. For this purpose we need to distinguish authority needed for practical affairs and authority pertaining to doctrine. With regard to teaching, the Qur'ān and the hadiths are available to all who have the ability to understand them. Teaching authority is based on knowledge. There is no magisterium to settle doctrinal disputes in Islam. Such disputes can only be settled through strength of argument, reason and knowledge of the relevant sources. It is the duty of each Muslim to ascertain the truth of the fundamental teachings of the religion by his own intellectual efforts, and merely taking the word of an expert is specifically forbidden.

With respect to legal and political matters, however, some criterion for action is a practical necessity. In matters of religious law, each of the Shi'a must either have competence to derive the law from its sources or follow the rulings of someone who has such competence. Those who are not experts are advised to investigate, by asking those who are familiar with those who devote their lives to the study of Islamic law; and on the basis of this investigation to follow the pious *mujtahid* they believe is the most knowledgeable as a source or *marji'* of imitation (*taqlīd*) in matters of the practical laws of Islam.

According to some *hadiths*, not only did the Imams refer people to the scholars of Islamic law for legal rulings, but also for arbitration of disputes. This has been taken by many Shi'i scholars to indicate a general delegation of practical authority over disputed issues to the *'ulamā'*. The political form of this idea of delegation is known as the doctrine of *wilāyah al-faqīh*, the guardianship of the jurisprudent. Imam Khomeini (q) also argued on rational and practical grounds for the need of religious government. The basic idea is that Islam includes teachings about social, economic and political affairs that can only be put into practice through an Islamic government, a government guided by the teachings and rulings of Islam as understood by those with appropriate expertise in such matters.

There are various interpretations of the doctrine of *wilāyah al-faqīh*, which differ on such issues as the qualifications for the position and the scope of its authority; however there is general agreement that the institution is based on exigency and the application of reason to various principles of Islam and governance. It is not a position, like that of the papacy, authorized through something like apostolic succession. One of the most famous statements of the doctrine in recent history is that of Hajj Mulla Ahmad Naraqi (1771-1829):

> As for the jurists' duty over people's affairs and over what they have full and all-embracing *wilāyah* we, by divine grace, say that a just jurist's *wilāyah* lies in two matters. First, every *wilāyah* possessed by the Prophet and the Imams (who were the sovereigns and pillars of Islam) is bestowed upon the jurists as well, except what is excluded by juridical proof such as *ijmā'* (consensus) or *nass* (established text) ... Secondly, every action concerning the people's faith and worldly affairs is necessary and inescapable according to reason and habit or according to *Shar'* (law) ...
>
> It is obvious and understood by every common or learned man, that when the messenger of God is on a trip, someone behind him is assigned as his substitute, successor, trustee, proof ... This person will accrue all the power that the Prophet enjoyed over his community. There is no doubt that most *nusus* (texts) concerning the *awsiyā* (heirs) of the infallible Imam imply the transfer of all power, not merely some of it. This becomes clear especially in connection with the traditions concerning

> the rank and place of jurists, who are the most excellent men after the Imams ...[5]

When we look through the history of Shi'i political thought, we find that from time to time there have been groups of Shi'a who have taken a position diametrically opposed to that expressed above by Naraqi. One of the most extreme of these groups has been the *hujjatiyyah*, who argue that during the greater occultation of the Twelfth Imam, the Shi'a cannot enforce Islamic law, carry out its punishments, or hold Friday prayers. Others, such as Shahid Mutahhari, argued that during the major occultation, many of the responsibilities of the Imam can be carried out by the office of *wilāyah al-faqīh*, but that some remain as the exclusive authority of the Imam. The dominant view among the Shi'i *'ulamā'* today, however, tends to favour the position that there are no specific areas of authority that are reserved by the Imam and cannot be carried out by the office of *wilayah al-faqīh*.

Despite precedence in Shi'i theological writings, such as the above quote from Mulla Ahmad Naraqi, the doctrine of *wilāyah al-faqīh* was not put into practice in the formation of a government until the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979. Since the Revolution, the office has become recognized in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Clerical authority in Shi'i Islam, however, takes various forms. At the core is the capacity for *ijtihād*, the ability to derive the rulings of religious law from its sources. The conditions traditionally given for one to have this ability are knowledge and piety. Not all who wear the Shi'i clerical robes and turban have reached the level of *ijtihād*, however. In an Islamic government, the judges will be appointed by the *wali al-faqīh*. Even in the absence of Islamic government, however, it has been common for Muslim communities to appeal to their local scholars to act as judges in various sorts of disputes. One who has reached the level of *ijtihād* is able to issue a legal ruling on the basis of the sources of Islamic law, called a *fatwa*. One who issues such rulings is called a *mufti* (although this term is not much used among contemporary Shi'a).

As mentioned above, every Shi'i who is not able to derive religious rulings on the basis of their sources must follow one who has this ability. The *mujtahid* who is followed is called a *marji' taqlīd* (source of imitation).

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[5] Hajj Mulla Ahmad Naraqi, *'Awaid al-Ayyam*, Maktab-e Basirati, Qom, n.d., pp. 187-188, translated in *Wilayah and Marjaiyah Today*, Al-Fajr, Houston, 1995, p. 214.

Traditionally, the conditions given for being a *marji' taqlīd* were that he should be the most learned of the pious scholars. In order to determine who has such qualifications, one should himself be a scholar or one should consult with those who have sufficient expertise. In recent years, however, it has been suggested that the condition of learning includes deep awareness of contemporary issues and views, as well as social and political problems. In the case of *wilāyah al-faqīh*, the person who is to occupy this position should be a *mujtahid*, he should be pious and just, he should have administrative talent and courage, and he should have social and political insight.[6]

In addition to *ijtihād*, *marji'iyah*, *wilāyah al-faqīh*, and judgeship, the Shi'i clergy plays many other roles, such as leading prayers, teaching, leading people in the performance of hajj, giving sermons, doing research on theological issues, etc. Each of these positions has its own specific requirements. In general, however, the appeal to the clergy to perform any such function is based on the requisites of knowledge and piety.

With regard to the recognition of authority, there is no compulsion. Each believer is advised to use his own reason to accept the authority of those best qualified for its exercise. No one can be compelled to accept any particular person as *marji'*. Even with respect to the office of *wilāyah al-faqīh*, the current leader himself, Ayatollah Khamenei (may Allah protect him), has ruled that no one can be compelled to accept his authority and if one erroneously rejects this authority on the basis of his own reasoning, he is not to be considered a sinner because of this. On the other hand, failure to recognize authority is no excuse for disobedience of the law or criminal activity.

Tradition and Sunnah

In both Catholicism and Shi'i Islam, tradition may be seen as a source for religious teaching second only to scripture, and thus as authoritative. However, what is meant by tradition differs in these two faiths, although there are also several common points. Both Catholics and Muslims agree that divine guidance has been delivered by scripture and by the passing down of narrations from one generation to another. However, for Christians, scripture is also a record of what was passed down about

[6] See Ayatollah Ali Meshkini, 'Wilayat al-Faqih', in *Wilayah and Marjaiyah Today*, pp. 195-200.

the life of Jesus and his apostles, the epistles of Paul, and other written documents that were selected by the Church as authoritative, while for Muslims, scripture is the record of the revelation given to the Prophet. To Muslims, the New Testament looks more like a book of hadiths than the direct revelation *(wahy)* of God. Nevertheless, Christians and Muslims, along with Jews and Zoroastrians, are recognized by the Shi'a as *ahl al-kitāb*, 'people of the book'; and the books in question are taken as containing divine messages for their peoples. These books reach contemporary believers in any of these faiths by being handed down from one generation to another, that is, by tradition.

For Catholics, however, Church tradition is itself authoritative. Catholics believe that the history of the Church, the decisions made in its councils and the statements of doctrine enunciated by its popes are guided by the Holy Spirit, and as such have divine authority. For the Shi'a, to the contrary, there is no analogous belief. Theological doctrines that were common at one time may be rejected later if good reason is found for so doing regardless of traditional acceptance. Because of this, for example, Shaykh Saduq's theology was largely superseded by that of Shaykh Mufid, and later the *akhbārī* school of thought was displaced by the *uṣūlī* school. The fact that a given doctrine or practice becomes accepted by the majority of scholars at any given time carries no theoretical weight for other scholars. Each scholar must use the best of his own cognitive abilities to study the sources and reach his own conclusions. In this sense, the Shi'i approach to religion is a rationalist one.

Sunnah, which is often translated as 'tradition', is indeed authoritative for Muslims, but not the *sunnah* of the clergy, of the seminaries, or of the Muslim community; rather, it is the *sunnah* of the Prophet (*s*) that is taken by Muslims as second in authority only to the Qur'an.

In Islamic jurisprudence, four sources of legal rulings are commonly mentioned:

1. the Qur'an
2. the Sunnah
3. reason (Shi'i) or analogy (Sunni)
4. consensus.

The reliance on consensus in Sunni legal theory is in some respects similar to the Catholic reliance on tradition, although Catholics

have focused more on doctrinal issues while Muslims have been more concerned with practical rulings. However, for the Shi'a, consensus is reduced to the Sunnah, since it is valid only when it unveils the view of the Prophet or the Imams. Hence, for all practical purposes, in present circumstances the sources of legal rulings among the Shi'a are limited to the first three mentioned above: the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and reason.

Sunni and Shi'i Muslims are in agreement that what is meant by the Sunnah is the example of the Prophet in word and deed as recorded and passed down in the form of narrations, called hadiths. For the Shi'a, however, narrations of the words and deeds of the twelve Imams are also taken as authoritative. Sometimes this is justified on the grounds that knowledge of the Sunnah of the Prophet *(s)* was best preserved in his household, his *ahl al-bayt*. Nevertheless, the authority of the Imams is seen as derivative relative to the Sunnah of the Prophet *(s)*, and the Imams themselves often justified the stance they took with reference to the Sunnah of the Prophet.

MORALITY AND PRAXIS IN THE CATHOLIC TRADITION[1]

Scott M Thomas

> 'What is to be done to prevent increased exchange between cultures (which ought to lead to genuine and fruitful dialogue between groups and nations) from disturbing the life of communities, overthrowing traditional wisdom and endangering the character of people? How is the dynamism and expansion of the new [universal] culture to be fostered without losing living fidelity to the heritage of tradition?' (GS, 56).
>
> 'The differences of culture and value systems ... Render the social question much more complex, precisely because this question has assumed a universal dimension (SS, 14).

This chapter examines how Alasdair MacIntyre's social theory can help the Church to more clearly and effectively articulate the morality and praxis of the Catholic tradition. It will do so in the context of world poverty, international development, and the need for greater inter-religious dialogue in international relations today.

Morality, praxis, and international development

What is morality and praxis in the Catholic tradition, and why bother with it anyway? The same question could be asked about Islamic ethics as well. Is there, for example, a 'Catholic' or 'Islamic' approach to law,

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[1] Scott M Thomas, Department of Economics and International Development, Institute for International Policy Analysis, University of Bath, United Kingdom. This paper was prepared for the Catholic-Shi'a Conference, Ampleforth Abbey, 2005, and based on 'The Call to Justice: The Legacy of *Gaudium et Spes* 40 Years Later', Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, March 16-18, 2005, Vatican City, Rome, Italy.

architecture, engineering, economic development, or urban planning? V S Naipaul, for example, in *Among the Believers*, his account of a journey to the Islamic Republic of Iran, was confronted with this question shortly after the revolution. It seems that during a visit to the holy city of Qum one of the English-language magazines, *The Message of Peace*, had an article on what it called 'Islamic urban planning', 'Could there be such a thing,' Naipaul asked. 'Apparently; and more, it was badly needed. Islam was a complete way of life; it didn't separate the worldly from the spiritual. Hence, it was necessary, in addition to avoiding materialist industrial excesses, to plan for a 'theocratic society'. ... Problems. But the very existence of these problems proved the need for sensible Islamic planning. And a solution was possible.'[2] The same magazine quoted extensively from E F Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*, one of the first books in the 1970s to call for appropriate technology, and what we now call sustainable development.

Schumacher is a classic account of how culture, religion, and development are related to each other (one of the early chapters, for example was called, 'Buddhist economics').[3] Naipaul, however, rubbishes his message. 'Technology is evil,' he summarizes—or he summarizes what the Qum magazine seemed to be saying, and so he concludes, the Islamists were simply 'lashing the West with its own words.'[4] This is a form of argument, as it happens, is common in Shi'ite apologetics.[5] In fact, what Schumacher said about economics would be echoed today by many religious leaders, development practitioners, and the practitioners of a variety of faith-based approaches to development, including the Catholic Church regarding authentic human development:

> 'The great majority of economists is still pursuing the absurd ideal of making their 'science' as scientific and precise as physics,

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[2] V S Naipaul, *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey*, Vintage Books, New York, 1981, 31-32.

[3] E F Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*, Harper and Row, New York, 1973.

[4] Naipaul, 33, 45.

[5] The Ayatollah Khomeini was born in the provincial town of Khomein, and his family is related by marriage to Mir Hamed Husain Hindi Nashaburi, the famous Indian author who resided there. He wrote *Abaqat ul-Anwar* ('Containers of Light'), which is the first major effort in Shi'ite literature to attack Sunni beliefs on the basis of Sunni *hadith*, i.e. turning Sunni documents against them. Michael M J Fischer, 'Imam Khomeini: Four Levels of Understanding,' in John L Esposito (ed.), *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1983, 151.

> as if there were no qualitative distinction between mindless atoms and men made in the image of God.'[6]

Should it surprise us, as Naipaul indicates, Schumacher's book was popular among the first generation of Islamic revolutionaries in Iran? A debate over a more holistic understanding of development has been taking place for thirty years among many scholars and development practitioners. This general view is associated with a criticism of capitalism and radical political economy in so far as it is a less narrowly conceived approach to a positive, i.e. value-free, economic orthodoxy, but it is really both radical and conservative in so far as it 'recognizes that man is a social being whose arrangements for the production and distribution of economic goods must be, if society is to be liveable, consistent with congruent institutions of family, political, and cultural life.'[7]

It is now more widely recognized that successful development, no matter how it is defined, can only occur if social and economic change correspond with the moral basis of society. This view has sought to connect religion and religious values both to the actual kind of development that takes place, and to the meaning of development.[8] When development does not correspond with a society's moral base, and a country makes a cruel choice for development over authenticity, like the Shah's Iran- or, even Poland or the Philippines, and promotes a distorted form of modernity and development, this cannot only lead to policy failure, but also to political instability, or even revolution. Today we would likely add religious terrorism, and genocide and ethnic civil war, in places like Bosnia, Rwanda, the Sudan, and Sri Lanka.[9]

The problem is how a 'Catholic,' 'Christian,' 'Islamic,' or Shi'ite ethic can be related to a secular analysis of society. What concerned the Islamic revolutionaries was a form of economic development, and more

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[6] Schumacher, 49.

[7] Charles K Wilber, ' Preface to the First Edition' (1973), in Charles K Wilber and Kenneth P Jameson (eds.), *The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1996, sixth edition, xv-xvi.

[8] Charles K Wilber and Kenneth P Jameson, 'Religious Values and the Social Limits to Development,' *World Development*, 8, 7/8 (1980), 467-479; Thierry G Verhelst, *No Life Without Roots: Culture and Development*, Zed Books, London, 1990; B Haverkort, K van't Hooft, and W Hiemstra (eds.), *Ancient Roots, New Shoots: Endogenous Development in Practice*, Kumarian Press, Bloomfield, CT, 2003.

[9] Manning Nash, 'Islam in Iran: Turmoil, Transformation or Transcendence?', *World Development*, 8, 7/8 (1980), 555-561.

broadly, a common set of assumptions about religion in social theory that were at least partly responsible for the way culture and religion were ignored or marginalized in the study of the social sciences.[10]

Why bother with Christian, Catholic, or Islamic ethics anyway? The Catholic answer since the Second Vatican Council has been because of what the world's main religious traditions show us, and what the Catholic tradition shows most fully, about what it means to be authentically human. In other words, modern Catholic moral and social teaching has argued that cultural authenticity and development are integrally related, if there is going to be sustainable development, what the Church has come to call integral human development. This is a position which the World Bank, Western donor governments, and development NGOs have increasingly recognized. When the poor have spoken they have expressed more confidence in religious leaders, and organizations than their own, corrupt governments, public sector welfare services, or even secular development NGOs.[11]

Alasdair MacIntyre's social theory: recovering the theopraxis of Catholic social teaching

Few contemporary social theorists have taken other religious, cultural, and social traditions as seriously as Alasdair MacIntyre. He would no doubt disagree with the distinctions, conventionally drawn, between theory, morality, and praxis, the process of putting theoretical knowledge into practice—in this case ideas about Catholic morality and theology.

MacIntyre's social theory has uncovered the way all moral traditions work—whether they are Catholic or Shi'ite, and by uncovering the way both traditions work, by an understanding of the way the virtues, practices, narratives of religious traditions are embedded or even embodied in their religious traditions, and in this way he has also uncovered a new basis for inter-religious dialogue, regarding faith-based development organizations, conflict resolution, and peacemaking.

MacIntyre calls attention to the kind of noisy, shrill, inconclusive, interminability of moral debate in domestic politics in Western societies,

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[10] Scott M Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations*, Palgrave, New York and London, 2005, chapter 2, 47-70.

[11] Deepa Narayan, *Voices of the Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us?*, Washington, DC, Oxford University Press for the World Bank, 2000.

for example, over abortion, euthanasia, welfare reform, the role of women in society, homosexuality, sexual ethics, or even what constitutes so-called 'family values.' However, there is now also a shrillness and interminability of debate over ethical issues in international politics, such as the ethics of humanitarian intervention—the Balkans, Somalia, Rwanda, Sudan, Zimbabwe, etc., the morality of economic sanctions—Iraq, Serbia, Israel, etc., just war or pacifism, and racism or religious discrimination, for example, over the wearing of religious symbols, the veil in France, Sikh turban, kosher or *halal* ritual slaughter of animals.[12]

For MacIntyre, rationality is not independent of social and historical context, or of any specific understanding of human nature. Values and ethical conceptions such as what is good, what is just, as well as notions of obligation and the rationality on which they are based, are embodied in particular social traditions and communities. There is no rationality independent of tradition, no 'view from nowhere,' no set of rules or principles which will commend themselves to all people, independent of their conception of the good.[13]

MacIntyre's social theory contributes to a fundamentally new understanding of religion in theology, religious studies, and the social sciences. Following MacIntyre, 'post-liberal' theologians—Hans Fei, George Lindbeck, etc., have rejected what they call the 'cognitive-propositional' approach to religion. Religion is neither a body of ideas, a belief system, or an ideology, as political scientists would put it; nor is religion what Max Weber would call a 'social ethic', in which the ethics of the religion can be separated from doctrine or theology. Religion is also not what Clifford Geertz has called a 'cultural system', i.e. a set of symbols which locates religion inside the person by establishing certain moods, motivations, conceptions as styles of religiosity. Each of these definitions is part of the 'invention of religion' by Western modernity.[14]

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[12] Nancy Murphy, Brad J Kallenberg, and Mark Thiessen Nation (eds.), *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics After MacIntyre*, Trinity Press International, Harrisburg, PA 1997.

[13] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2d ed., Duckworth, London, 1985, and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* Duckworth, London, 1988.

[14] Max Weber, 'The Social Psychology of the World Religions,' in H H Girth and C Wright Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Oxford University Press New York, 1946, 267-301; Clifford Geertz, 'Religion as a Cultural System,' in Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Basic Books, New York, 1973, 87-125.

Instead, MacIntyre holds that religion should be interpreted as a type of social tradition—a historically extended, constantly evolving debate about the nature of the good in a particular society. They are embodied in, and therefore cannot be separated from, a specific social and cultural context, a view that is increasingly accepted by many scholars of religion.[15]

Post-liberals have called this the 'cultural-linguistic' approach to religion. What is important about this approach for scholars and practitioners of international development is that it emphasizes that content matters—religious experience and linguistic formulation cannot be separated. It recognizes the historical and mediating role of culture in all human thought and experience—so it is communitarian, and it is historicist, in so far as it insists on the importance of cultural and religious traditions in historic faith communities. It is these faith communities that make up the real existing communities in the developing world.

What Weber, Geertz, and others miss is the fact that virtues and moral judgements in 'religion' are not declaratory ideas, norms, values, principles, or moral statements to which rational (autonomous) individuals simply decide to give their intellectual assent (i.e. the 'cognitive-propositional' approach to religion). What moral judgements mean in any community is shaped by its linguistic conventions, and is inextricably connected to the practices of its religious tradition. Morals are only intelligible as types of behaviour (social practices) passed on through the narratives that shape the identity of the community.

Therefore, MacIntyre's social theory contributes to a richer, narrative conception of human identity. It recognizes how religious traditions shape identity, thought, and experience around the world. Later on we will see how this approach to religion is helpful for understanding identity in developing countries, and this is what makes the concept of 'Christian personalism' in Catholic social teaching so relevant to developing countries as a part of the Church's approach to authentic human development.

Now, this is not a new perspective, for it is how the early Church understood the moral life. Character and community developed together as part of the moral ecology of the early Church. 'The moral life [was] part of

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[15] Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1993; Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2003.

the life of faith, of life within the Church, and of one's earthly pilgrimage,' it was not, as liberal modernity or today's theorists of cosmopolitan ethics would have it, for example, Brian Berry, David Held, and Andrew Linklater, about following 'the dictates of natural reason nor allegiance to a set of self-evident autonomous moral principles.'[16] For the New Testament and the early Church, morality—the moral life, is determined within the life of faith as a response to God's grace. This is what *Veritatis Splendor*, and the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* have re-emphasized as part of John Paul II's recovery of the Church's moral teaching (VS, 10-11). Thus, it is this aspect of early Christian life that is being retrieved in the aftermath of MacIntyre' social theory by the modern virtue-ethics tradition, and by communitarian approaches to theology. However, rather oddly, given the 'communitarian' aspects of developing societies, these are the aspects that have been underplayed in some interpretations of Catholic social teaching on international development.[17]

MacIntyre's definition is crucial for how religion should be understood in international development. Most Western governments and development agencies have adopted what Yale University law professor Stephen L Carter calls a 'culture of disbelief' in public debates about social policy, and his general argument can be extended to foreign aid policy as well.[18] They have argued that 'religion' gets in the way of helping the poor or promoting development. It is all right, following Weber, for religion to provide the 'motives', 'inner factors', or 'the practical impulses'—love, charity, compassion, and a sense of justice or obligation—for faith-based NGOs to participate in relief and development, but it should not interfere in the *content* of development—that is, it should not influence what is effectively a secular development agenda, with its own understandings of what constitutes rationality, progress, social justice, and modern economic development.

What MacIntyre's social theory makes clear, which most development practitioners do not even grapple with, is that debates over development policy are taking place within the crisis of Western liberalism—the fragmenting of societies, with people increasingly separated

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[16] David Fergusson, *Community, Liberalism and Christian Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, 9-21, esp. p. 21.

[17] Paul Vallely (ed.), *The New Politics: Catholic Social Teaching for the Twenty-First Century*, SCM, London, 1998; Ian Linden, *A New Map of the World*, Darton, Longman, Todd, London, 2003.

[18] Stephen L Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion*, Basic Books, New York, 1993.

from their moral traditions, institutions, and communities.[19] However, the purpose of development policy—as the social teaching of John Paul II indicates, with its criticism of Marxism, collectivism, *and* liberal capitalism, is not to promote the kind of development in poor countries that contributes to their societies falling apart like ours in the West (SS, CA). Doesn't the Catholic Church, with its global vision, and concept of integral or authentic human development have something more to offer the world? In the first century of a new global era that is post-secular as well as post-modern, Catholic social teaching may be another way, to borrow Ivan Illich's phrase, for people of faith in developing countries to be 'outwitting the 'developed' countries.'[20]

We can now see more clearly in our post-modern era the extent to which the conventional approach to foreign aid and development policy is rooted in Western concepts of liberal modernity. The religious missionaries of faith-based organizations and the secular missionaries of the development NGOs are both proselytizing, each according to their understanding of modernity and development. Secular missionaries have reduced the 'thick' social practices embedded in the traditions of the main world religions and communities into 'thin' practices: abstract moral rules, norms, or values, which can only be appealed to by a 'rationality' detached from religion, culture, and tradition. In other words, the secular missionaries of the development NGOs have turned what MacIntyre would call a practice-based morality, or a Christian morality rooted in the 'thick' virtues and social practices of ecclesial life, into a rule-based or principle-based approach to the ethical dilemmas in development.

The problem is that this approach to foreign policy, development policy, and international ethics misunderstands the moral predicaments of the developing world. If MacIntyre is right about the tradition-dependent nature of rationality, then morality is not detached from the traditions and communities through which most people in the world live out their moral and social lives. As Jean Bethke Elshtain has noted, 'the vast majority of people in the world surely do not think of themselves as subjects of international duties and rights.' They experience the moral life, and understand the meaning of well-being, development, social tolerance, or non-violent conflict resolution, within the context of the virtues, social

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[19] Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Democracy on Trial*, Basic Books, New York, 1995.

[20] Ivan Illich, 'Outwitting the "Developed" Countries.' in Charles K Wilber (ed.), *The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment*, Random House, New York: 1973), 401-409.

practices, and traditions of their communities, including their religious traditions. These are the real existing communities in international development.[21]

In a world of growing cultural and religious diversity what does this understanding of religion mean for Catholic social teaching on international development? Firstly, Catholic social teaching has been overly concerned with its appeal to 'modern man'—meaning modern secular man, and to 'all men of good will;' but given the global resurgence of religion, the more relevant appeal today is a less Euro-centric one. It is directed to other faith communities, not to Harvey Cox's 'secular city'—New York, Paris, London, or Berlin; but, to the faithful city—Lagos, Nairobi, Seoul, Manila, and Jakarta, as Cox has now acknowledged in his study of global Pentecostalism.[22]

Secondly, what MacIntyre's social theory helps us to recover is the fact that Catholic social teaching regarding social questions, on foreign aid, and international development policy is part of the larger corpus of Catholic theology, and is as an integral part of the Church's teaching (MM, 150-177). Even Pope John XXIII—the secular world's most popular pontiff, insists the reconstructing of social relationships in truth, justice, and love cannot be separate from theology. He says quite clearly, the 'social teaching proclaimed by the Catholic Church cannot be separated from her traditional teaching regarding man's life' (MM, 222).[23]

The Church is the mother and teacher of the nations so that all may find salvation, as well as the fullness of life, for the teaching of Christ embraces the whole person in the whole world—soul, body, intellect, and will (MM, 1-3). This is the theological foundation of the Church's concept of integral or authentic human development, and it is an inherent part of the Church's theology, as well as its evangelistic mission to spread the gospel to all nations (RM); and, arguably, it is not the same thing as holistic,

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[21] Jean Bethke Elshtain, 'Really Existing Communities,' *Review of International Studies* 25, 1, 1999), 141-46.

[22] Harvey Cox, *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Christianity and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first* Century, Addison-Wesley, New York, 1995).

[23] Stanley Hauerwas and Jana Bennett argue for the theo-political primacy of the encyclicals, and why their moral and social teaching cannot be separated. ' "A Recall to Christian Life": What is Social about the Catholic Social Teaching' (unpublished MSS), the author would like to thank Stanley Hauerwas for making this paper available to him). My paper agrees with this way of interpreting Catholic social teaching and draws the implications of this position out for international development policy.

secular, approaches to social development rooted in liberal modernity. Therefore, the concept of integral human development in Catholic social teaching cannot be separated from its theological foundations.

Clearly, the Church's concept of integral human development needs to be more directly related to the changing discourse on a more holistic meaning of development, and the way considerations of culture and religion are coming in to the discourse and practice of aid agencies.[24] Briefly, it is now more widely recognized that successful development, no matter how it is defined, can only occur if social and economic change correspond with the moral basis of society. This view has sought to connect religious values both to the actual *kind* of development that takes place, and to the *meaning* of development.[25]

Authenticity and development: MacIntyre's social theory and authentic human development

In our post-modern era the Catholic Church's concept of integral or authentic human development can help the Church respond more effectively to the struggles for authenticity and development taking place throughout the developing world as part of the global resurgence of religion. This section will examine what MacIntyre's social theory means for three aspects of international development policy: (i) Christian personalism—rethinking, religion, civil society, and development, (ii) subsidiarity, and the role of faith-based organizations, and (iii) global justice and the common good in a world of cultural diversity.

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[24] Scott M Thomas, 'Faith and Foreign Aid, or How the World Bank Got Religion,' *The Brandywine Review of Faith and International Affairs*, 2, 2 (2004): 21-30; Scott M Thomas, 'Where Faith and Economics Meet? Rethinking Religion, Civil Society, and International Development,' in S M Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations*, Chapter 9, 219-246.

[25] Charles K Wilber and Kenneth P Jameson, 'Religious Values and the Social Limits to Development,' *World Development*, 8, 7/8 (1980): 467-479; Thierry G Verhelst, *No Life Without Roots: Culture and Development*, London: Zed Books, 1990), B Haverkort, K van't Hooft, and W Hiemstra (eds.), *Ancient Roots, New Shoots: Endogenous Development in Practice*, Kumarian Press, Bloomfield, CT, 2003.

(i)
Christian Personalism: rethinking, religion, civil society, and development

The concept of Christian personalism can be interpreted within MacIntyre's narrative conception of identity since both conceptions share a relational understanding of identity, rather than a notion of identity rooted in the rational autonomy of the individual in liberal modernity. This has crucial implications for how Catholic aid agencies, other faith-based NGOs, as well as secular development NGOs, understand how religion and civil society are related to democracy and development.

After a decade of civil society programmes adopted by Western donor governments to promote democracy and development what we now know is that the modern form of civil society is unrecognizable in most parts of the developing world. The reason for this is that a new kind of identity as well as new forms of social and political organization is required for the modern concept of civil society.

What the foreign aid and development literature has not emphasized is that the modern concept of civil society going back to the Scottish Enlightenment altered the concept of identity on which civil society was based.[26] It was David Hume and Adam Ferguson who helped transform both the concept of the individual and the concept of civil society. They did this, as Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor have explained, by rejecting the Aristotelian conception of morality, with its concept of the *telos*, or ultimate governing principles that guide the moral life, and posited the notion of autonomous individuals motivated by moral sentiments—passions, emotions, and desires. Civil society simply became the arena in which each person pursues their own idea of the good life in a utilitarian way.[27]

It is Ernst Gellner who has emphasized more strongly than most scholars that a new kind of person, with a new kind of human identity, accompanied the development of civil society in the eighteenth century.

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[26] June Howell and Jenny Pearce, 'Civil Society, the State, and the Market: A Triadic Development Model for the Twenty First Century?,' in Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce, *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder and London, 2001, 63-88 .

[27] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: a study in moral theory*, London: Duckworth, 1985), Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: the making of the modern identity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989.

Gellner calls a new kind of person, 'modular man', with a bolted-on identity, unencumbered by ethnicity, religion, or other kinds of affective ties, which is embedded in a new kind of culture, the culture of liberal democracy and capitalist modernity.[28] The modern concept of civil society is part of a self-congratulatory form of political liberalism. John Hall argues it is one of the unique accomplishments of the West.[29] Many people consider Habermas' celebrated theory of the public sphere to reflect at its best this concept of civil society.[30]

Therefore, the modern concept of civil society is inevitably a normative concept as well as an analytical one, and this is something which the Church can recognize given its concept of authentic human development. The idea of building civil society in developing countries has to be seen as part of the wider debates over modernization and Westernization. Civil society cannot be examined as a value-free, mechanistic, or technical way for Western donor governments and aid agencies to promote freedom, democracy, development, or conflict prevention. The debate over building civil society is part of the struggle over church and state or mosque and state in developing countries, it is part of the struggle over the boundaries of the sacred and the profane, and the battles over authenticity and development taking place throughout the developing world.

In fact, the modern form of civil society is unrecognizable in most parts of the developing world. Religious beliefs and the ascriptive aspects of clan, ethnic, or religion remain a part of the 'modernization of tradition' in developing countries.[31] Contrary to modernization theory, the intermingling of ethnic groups and professions in urban life is not leading to the bolted-on, individualized, social conditioning required for the modern kind of civil society Hall, Gellner, and Habermas have celebrated. Quite the opposite has occurred with the rise of identity politics, the resurgence of these ethnic, religious, or regional forms of identity.

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[28] Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1994.

[29] John A Hall, 'In Search of Civil Society,' in John A Hall (ed.), *Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995, 1-31.

[30] Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1989.

[31] L Rudolph and S Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1967.

> 'Africans do not conceive of themselves as discrete individuals in the Western mould ... Individuals are not perceived as being meaningfully and instrumentally separate from the (various) communities to which they belong. This means that individuals remain firmly placed within the family, kin, and communal networks which (s)he is issued ... Africans do not now appear to feel that their 'being modern' requires them to be single individuals whose life choices are essentially determined by their own private circumstances and desires. Difficult as it may be for us to conceive of modernity other than in our own terms, it is necessary to understand how Africans can be both modern and 'non-individual(ist)' if we are to make sense of political events on the continent.'[32]

We can see more clearly why, as MacIntyre has argued, his narrative conception of the self, and his concepts of the virtues, and social practices out of which his understanding of morality, social tradition, and community emerges, may very well be consistent with the intuitive understanding of morality and social practices still found in most parts of the developing world.[33] MacIntyre, it will be recalled, argues our values and ethical conceptions and the rationality on which they are based, are socially embodied in particular social traditions and communities. There is no rationality independent of tradition, no set of moral principles or guidelines which will commend themselves to all, independent of their conception of the good.

The Church has a deeper, more coherent account of these human relationships with it understanding of Christian personalism, the human person and society (in contrast to the 'individualism' in liberal modernity), and MacIntyre's relational, narrative understanding of identity helps us to see more clearly why this is the case. The self in this account is a self with a life story, embedded in the story of a larger community. Character is displayed and developed when individuals are inducted into particular communities, which are themselves shaped by larger narratives and social traditions. This continues to be the case in Africa, but the same thing can be said about other parts of the developing world, and even of Japan and East Asia.[34]

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[32] Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascol Daloz, *Africa Works: disorder as political instrument*, James Currey, London, 1999, 52-53.

[33] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice?, Which Rationality*, Duckworth, London, 1996, 354-55.

[34] Joanne Baldine, 'Is Human Identity an Artifact?: How Some Conceptions of the Asian and Western Self Fare During Technological and Legal Development', *Phil and Tech*, 3, 2 (1997), 25-36.

If rationality is dependent on tradition, then morality is not detached from historical communities and cultural and religious traditions. Contrary to Weber, what is important are not only the religiously-based values or motives for social change and community development, but the kind of moral reasoning that gives rise to the content of those convictions and the faith communities in which they are embedded.

Appeals to the virtues and moral judgements in religion, or to duty, charity, justice, compassion, obligation, and tolerance—the appeals to conscience, John Paul II has mentioned (SS, 4), are not free-floating moral propositions to which rational (autonomous) individuals simply give their intellectual assent. What they mean is shaped by the linguistic conventions of different faith communities, connected to the practices of a religious tradition, and are only intelligible because they are recognized types of behaviour (social practices) passed on through the narratives that shape the identity of these communities.

Therefore, for MacIntyre, as for Catholic moral and social teaching, the actions of human persons cannot be isolated from each other, for every act in an act of the whole person. The question is not, 'What am I to do?' in a particular situation, for this is the kind of single questions framed in what is called 'quandary ethics,' which emerges from the moral predicament of the rational and autonomous individual in secular modernity and political liberalism.[35] At issue for faith communities is a more primary question, one that is identified with MacIntyre's narrative understanding of human identity: 'Of which stories am I a part?,' for as David Burrell has argued regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there are 'narratives competing for our souls', but the same could be said for the ethical dilemmas in development or the conflicts in developing countries.[36]

The vast majority of people in the world, as the Catholic Church, and even the World Bank now acknowledge, do not interpret and live out their moral and social lives according to the rationality and autonomy of liberal modernity. They still experience the moral life, however imperfectly it is lived out, as MacIntyre has indicated, and in ways that resemble the

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[35] Edmund Pincoffs, 'Quandary Ethics', in Stanley Hauerwas and Alasdair MacIntyre (eds.), *Revisions: Changing Perspectives in Moral Philosophy*, University of Notre Dame Press, South Bend, IN, 1983, 92-112.

[36] David B Burrell, 'Narratives Competing for Our Souls,' in James P Sterba (ed.), *Terrorism and International Justice*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, 88-100.

Catholic principle of Christian personalism, within the virtues, practices, and social traditions that are a part of their faith communities.

What we can now see is that the modern virtue-ethics tradition in the aftermath of MacIntyre's social theory allows for the crucial role of churches, mosques, temples, and other places of worship in building what Stanley Hauerwas has called 'communities of character' as a part of foreign aid policy. The virtue-ethics approach argues that the primary task of religious social ethics is not to come up with policies to promote justice, peace, or social change and development. When religious social ethics defines its task in this way the churches, mosques, or temples that make up faith communities in developing countries can easily be marginalized or forgotten, or they simply become another part of civil society, democratic pluralism, and part of a secular, a Western development agenda, as we have seen in the ICRC's view of ethics and development or the Carnegie Commission's view of religion and deadly conflict. Faith seems to be of secondary importance to the 'real' and more general goal of promoting social change, a more just society, preventing deadly conflict, or meeting the World Bank's Millennium Development Goals.

However, virtue-ethics, and Christian personalism's narrative concept of identity emphasize that the *truthfulness* of religious convictions cannot be separated from the *kind of community* that the church, the mosque, or temple is, or is trying to become. Liberal notions of freedom, social justice, or peace are not free-standing values which any one of good will can simply give their intellectual assent. How they are interpreted is part of how the virtues and practices of a religious tradition are enacted, embodied, and disseminated by a particular faith community.

Theology and social ethics cannot be separated as liberal modernity would have it. The 'good', therefore, of the Catholic, Islamic, Jewish, Hindu, or Buddhist religious tradition, is the *formation of a particular kind of community*, one that inculcates those virtues and practices necessary for what it means to authentically live out life according to Catholic social teaching or according to the social teaching of any other religious tradition. We have already seen that this is how John Paul II's recovery of moral theology, and the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* situate the Church's *social* teaching—within a moral framework examining what it means to live out life in Christ.

Such a community, contrary to our liberal presuppositions, does not have to be characterized by an oppressive uniformity. The mark of

a truthful community is partly seen in its dialogue about what are the primary 'goods' of its religious tradition, and it is seen in how it enables the diversity of gifts and virtues within it to flourish, for such a community of character is, as Hauerwas amusingly says, is also 'a community of characters', and there are enough of those in the Catholic Church.[37] Now, there is nothing to indicate building a community of character is easy. The issues faith communities must deal with in the developing world are complex, and include gender and reproductive issues, HIV/AIDS, religious approaches to work, wealth, and poverty, usury and interest, corruption, state privatization, inter-faith co-operation, and good governance.

Clearly, what is distinctive about a virtue-ethics approach to aid policy is the place it allows for the role of churches, mosques, temples, and other places of worship to participate in these aspects of development policy. This is not the same thing as aid agencies simply working with and through local churches, mosques, or temples, which is already happening since the shift in aid policy in the 1980s to channel funds through NGOs rather than corrupt governments as part of the privatization of foreign aid. Virtue-ethics and building communities of character, as we will see below, represents a fundamentally different way of working with places of worship in developing countries, and one which can help local Catholic communities to live out the Church's social teaching. It is also particularly important since the foreign aid industry has now recognized the key role faith-based organizations can play in reaching the poor and alleviating world poverty.

(ii)
Subsidiarity, Faith-based Organizations, and International Development Policy

According to the principle of subsidiarity 'a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions.' Rather, it 'should support it in case of need and help to co-ordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of

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[37] Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: toward a constructive Christian social ethic*, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Ind., 1981, Stanley Hauerwas, *After Christendom? How the church is to behave if freedom, justice, and a Christian nation are bad ideas*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tennessee, 1991.

society, but always with a view to the common good.'[38] The common good is defined as 'the sum total of social conditions which enable individuals, families, and organizations to achieve their own fulfilment more fully and easily.'[39] Therefore, all power in the Christian community should be exercised at the lowest level compatible with the common good, which is ordered for the end of persons and organizations that make up civil society. The role of the state is to promote the common good of civil society (Catechism, 1910).

Mater et Magistra (Christianity and Social Progress) recognized—in contrast to the mainstream experts on development in the 1960s, cultural matters should not be ignored amidst the concern for social change and development. People in developing countries, given the principle of subsidiarity, should 'feel themselves to be the ones chiefly responsible for their own progress,' and development experts should 'favor and help private enterprises in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity in order to allow private citizens themselves to accomplish as much as is feasible' (MM, 152, 159; 82, 53; PT, 140).

Forty years later, we can see better how the principle of subsidiarity can help to maintain the kind of balance in development policies between the state and civil society, which the World Bank and Western donor governments have not been very good at, with their emphasis on civil society and privatization, and only belatedly recognizing the positive role of the state.[40] These ideas are now mainstream, expressed in the current jargon or development discourse as the need for people in developing countries to feel 'ownership' over their development programmes, the need for 'participatory development', micro-finance programmes, and the support for civil society rather than state-led development (MM, 22, 152, 259).

However, given the global resurgence of religion, these Catholic social principles can be extended to the way power is exercised in other faith communities as well. One of the events that prompted the World Bank's interest in developing a dialogue and partnership with faith-based organizations was the discovery by its research programme, 'Voices of the Poor', that religious leaders and institutions were often the most trusted people and institutions in developing countries, given their own corrupt

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[38] CA, 48; *Catechism* 1883-1885.

[39] GS, 26, 74; *Catechism*, 1877-1948.

[40] *The State in a Changing World*, World Bank Development Report 1997, World Bank Washington, DC, 1997.

governments and public sector welfare services.[41] The World Bank and development NGOs have come to recognize that poor communities can also be described as faith communities. It turns out religion—its beliefs, rituals, practices, and institutions—is still central to the social, cultural, and moral life of these communities.[42] Indeed, as this paper has argued, they constitute the real existing communities in international development.

What can be called the new orthodoxy regarding religion and development was stated by Kumi Naidoo, the general secretary of CIVICUS, a global alliance of NGOs committed to strengthening civil action and civil society. In a study on charitable giving in Islam, Naidoo noted what turns out to be the practical result when the principle of subsidiarity is applied to foreign aid policy, regarding efficiency and transparency. '[F]aith-based organizations probably provide the best social and physical infrastructure in the poorest communities,' he says, '[because] churches, temples, mosques, and other places of worship [are] focal points for the communities they serve.'[43]

Thus, the principle of subsidiarity can be more directly related to the growing recognition by the World Bank, Western donor governments, and development NGOs that faith-based organizations can play a vital role in the delivery of social services, alleviating world poverty, and meeting the Millennium Development Goals.[44] However, for Catholic faith-based organizations the virtue-ethics perspective can help local churches and communities to see that there role in social service delivery is not only an instrumental one, but is part of their grappling with what it means for their churches to become the kind of communities of character that display those virtues and practices necessary for authentic human development.[45]

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[41] Deepa Narayan, *Voices of the Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us?*, Oxford University Press, for the World Bank, Washington, DC, 2000.

[42] Deryke Belshaw, Robert Calderisi, and Chris Sugden (eds.), *Faith in Development: Possibilities for Partnership between the World Bank and the Churches in Africa*, Regnum Books/Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, Oxford, 2001.

[43] Kumi Naidoo, 'The Charities Aid Foundation (CAF)', *Alliance*, 5, 1 (2000).

[44] Katherine Marshall and Richard Marsh (ed.), *Millennium Challenges for Development and Faith Institutions*, World Bank, Washington, DC, 2003, Katherine Marshall and Lucy Keough (eds.), *Mind, Heart, and Soul in the Fight Against Poverty*, World Bank, Washington, DC, 2004.

[45] Now, whether the World Bank sees faith-based organizations simply as a 'means' to achieve the Bank's own goals—the Millennium Development Goals, or as part of larger 'ends,' based on a more holistic concept of development, is one of the questions examined in a path-breaking PhD dissertation by John Rees, 'The Agency of Religious Concepts in the Development Ideology of the World Bank', School of Politics and International Relations, University of New South Wales, Australia.

(iii)
Global Justice, the Common Good, and International Development Policy in a World of Cultural Diversity

Catholic social teaching is about the integral or authentic development of *persons*, or rather persons-in-communities, or persons and peoples, rather than about the economic development of the multiplicity of national states that make up international society (Catechism, 1905-1912). What does this actually mean, for it sounds more like a radical sound bite than a statement of practical policy? How *can* the Church formulate its commitment to global justice and the common good in a world of growing cultural and religious diversity? After all, John Rawls and other political liberals argue that the pluralism of international society means such a project indebted to Aristotle, Aquinas, and Catholic social teaching has to be abandoned?[46]

The Church's concept of authentic human development cannot be separated from its understanding of global justice and the common good. The Church acknowledges the North-South gap, the need for foreign aid, and the need 'to reform international economic and financial institutions so that they will better promote equitable relationships' with developing countries—which, can be supported by all people of good will; but, it also argues for authenticity and development. Holistic development 'reduces dire poverty and economic exploitation,' but it also 'makes for growth in respect for cultural identities and openness to the transcendent' (Catechism, 2437-2441; SRS, 16, 32; CA, 26, 51).

The Church's concept of authentic human development is about promoting authentic social change and development. Catholic social teaching can help churches, temples, and mosques to build the kind of communities of character that generate the social capital—the ideas, and trust linking groups and individuals, important for democracy and development. What this is about is changing the political culture of societies and local communities. Crucially, as the Human Development Report on cultural liberty argues, this is what needs to be done to promote freedom, and the protection of minorities as well. Changes in policy, legislation, and constitutional provisions are all important it says, but

[46] David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002.

changing political culture is what allows real change to happen, which is what promotes tolerance and cultural diversity as part of the foundations of democracy.[47]

The Report says in the Foreword, when this does not happen, 'the consequences are disturbingly clear.' It is now more widely recognized that successful development, no matter how it is defined, can only occur if social and economic change correspond with the moral basis of society. This view has sought to connect religious values both to the actual kind of development that takes place, and to the meaning of development. We have seen that when development does not correspond with a society's moral base, and a country makes a cruel choice between bread and dignity, for development over authenticity, and promotes a distorted form of modernity and development, this cannot only lead to policy failure, but also to political instability, revolution, terrorism, and religious extremism.

It is for this reason, inter-religious dialogue, and the Church's vision of how faith, culture, and religion are related have vital implications for the debate over conflict, security, and development. The principles of subsidiarity and the common good fit together. The common good is ordered to the end of the persons and communities that make up the state and civil society, and global justice is the ordering of goods is domestic society and international society in such a way that they contribute to the authentic development of persons and communities.[48]

Thus, MacIntyre's social theory and the Church's social teaching can help faith-based development NGOs and the foreign aid policy of Western donor governments to take inter-religious dialogue, and cultural and religious pluralism seriously in international development. The principle of subsidiarity can help the Church to recognize what I have called the 'deeper pluralism' among the different associations or communities that make up civil society in developing countries. This pluralism includes the 'thick' practices—the virtues, social practices, and traditions—of the main world religions.

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[47] *Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World*, Human Development Report 2004, New York, United Nations Development Program, 2004. On what *can* be done at the international level see, Bruce Cronin, *Institutions for the Common Good: International Protection Regimes in International Society*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003.

[48] On a more general discussion of the Catholic social principles of justice, subsidiarity, and the common good see Hollenbach, 'The global common good,' in Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 212-244.

What is being argued here is contrary to Kantian ethics or cosmopolitanism in international ethics.[49] This does mean there are no universal moral values, only that Enlightenment rationality or the rationality of the Western Enlightenment is not the only way of arriving at them. Conceptions of the common good are embedded in different cultural and religious traditions. The task for Catholic aid agencies, and other faith-based agencies, given the principle of subsidiarity, is to identify those common, 'thick' social practices regarding the moral life, and the virtues necessary to sustain them, found at the community level in other religious traditions, such as charity (*zakat* in Islam), hospitality, etc. This can provide a way for the members of faith-based organizations in different religious traditions to work together to implement the common good in their community.[50] In this way the principle of subsidiarity also helps the Church and Catholic aid agencies implement its 'option for the poor,' and to do so in ways that promote authentic human development because it is promoting a type of development that is consistent with the moral base of these communities.

In other words, what can be called a 'rooted cosmopolitanism' is based on the common, thick social practices in different religious traditions, rather than appeals to the universal rationality of the Western Enlightenment.[51] This is the only place where a genuine dialogue between civilizations can occur, but as this dialogue takes place so does the dialogue *within* religious traditions. Virtue-ethics, the approach to ethics that has emerged in the aftermath of MacIntyre's social theory, shows how this can be done. In this sense, a virtue-ethics approach to foreign aid policy is akin to what is now called 'faith-based diplomacy,' a mode of

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[49] Terry Nardin and David R. Mapel (eds.), *Traditions of International Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992.

[50] I have given specific examples of this with the Family Planning Association of Bangladesh, the Women's Welfare Association in Indonesia, the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka, and the Sarkan Zoumountsi Association in the Cameroon, Scott M Thomas, 'Building Communities of Character: US Foreign Aid Policy and Faith-based Organizations,' *SAIS Review* (School of Advanced International Studies), Johns Hopkins University, 24, 2 (2004), 133-148.

[51] Hollenbach traces this term to Kwame Anthony Appiah in *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 221-222. I have picked up the term, and adapted it, using MacIntyre's narrative theory, from Mitchell Cohn, 'Rooted Cosmopolitanism,' in Nicholaus Mills (ed.), *Legacy of Dissent: 40 Years of Writing from Dissent Magazine*, Touchstone Books, New York, 1994, 131-140.

diplomacy in which an active religious faith is a vital part of diplomacy and peacebuilding.[52]

List of Cited Papal Encyclicals

CA	*Centesimus Annus*, On the Hundredth Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, 1991.
GS	*Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, 1965.
LG	*Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 1964.
MM	*Mater et Magistra*, Christianity and Social Progress, 1961.
NA	*Nostra aetate*, Declaration on the Relations of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, 1965.
PP	*Populorum Progressio*, On the Development of Peoples, 1967.
PT	*Pacem in Terris*, Peace on Earth, 1963.
EN	*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Evangelization in the Modern World, 1975.
RH	*Redemptor Hominis*, Redeemer of Man, 1979.
RM	*Redemptoris Missio*, Encyclical Letter on the Church's Missionary Mandate, 1990.
SS	*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, On Social Concern, 1987.
VS	*Veritatis Splendor*, The Church's Moral Teaching, 1993.

[52] Douglas Johnston (ed.), *Faith-Based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003.

THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Wulstan Peterburs OSB

Introduction

The question of what is distinctive, or specific, about Christian ethics is one that has been much controverted in Christian, and particularly Catholic, moral theology in recent years. At first sight, however, there may not seem to be too much to argue over, as it is clear to most that what is distinctive about Christian ethics is Christ. After all, the Christian moral life is fundamentally a response of the whole human person to God's self-revelation made known in Christ Jesus; a dialogue between mankind, created, fallen and redeemed, and his Creator, the Sovereign Lord, which in mankind's case begins in repentance and in God's mercy.

It might also appear that this predominantly Catholic debate, which focuses on the relationship of Christian ethics to a humanist morality accessible to reason, would be of little interest or relevance to our Shi'a dialogue partners. Yet, this debate gives a good flavour of the ways in which Catholic Christians make, and think about making, moral decisions; and there are also various points of contact between the two traditions. Both Catholics and Shi'a share a common inheritance from Aristotle, albeit mediated differently through their respective traditions, which finds concrete expression for Catholics in the natural law tradition's reliance upon reason for establishing what is either morally good or evil. Furthermore, both Catholics and Shi'a believe that faith informs a person's moral outlook and decision-making, and both hold that there are ways of behaving that would be characteristically Christian or Muslim. Moreover, if it could be established that the content of Christian ethics is in principle common, or available, to all humanity, then the possibility of a real dialogue and genuine co-operation between Catholics and Shi'a on moral issues is opened up, even if their motivation for moral action were to differ in

certain respects.[1] What follows is intended merely as an introduction to the debate, and offers a few pointers for further discussion and dialogue.

In his book, *Faith and Ethics*[2], Vincent MacNamara has outlined clearly and concisely the origins and course of the debate about the specificity of Christian ethics. The modern debate within the Catholic Church about the relationship of faith to ethics began in the 1940s in the renewal movement's reaction to the neo-scholastic moral theology of the period.[3] The supporters of the attempts to renew moral theology held that there was more to morality than was being offered by neo-scholastic natural law theory, and set out to Christianise it, insisting upon its specifically Christian character.[4] By the 1970s, the debate had become polarised between the supporters of an 'autonomous ethic' and the proponents of a 'faith ethic' (also known as a *Glaubensethik*).

There are two main strands to the autonomous ethic position, based upon the natural law tradition, which correspond to two different but related concerns. The first stresses that we should not expect to receive our moral norms from 'outside ourselves'—from revelation—but should realise that we are meant by God to discover them for ourselves through reason; and the second maintains that when the Christian judges or discerns, he does not arrive at any different content of morality from what is discovered by the humanist. In contrast to this, those in favour of a faith ethic, and who argue for a distinctive Christian ethics, maintain that Christian faith has a moral content that is unique to it. This debate, MacNamara comments:

> has set in sharp relief some questions and problems on which any constructive approach to Christian ethics must take a position. How are theologians to approach any moral question? Are they, as Christians, to approach it differently from the philosopher? Are they to appeal to the Bible as an authoritative source of moral knowledge? Are they to derive moral truths from truths of faith: if so, can they demonstrate the logic of the argument?

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[1] I leave aside here the complex related issue as to whether the content of Muslim ethics is in principle accessible to Christians or whether there are some specifically Muslim ways of acting.

[2] V MacNamara, *Faith and Ethics: Recent Roman Catholicism*, Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1985.

[3] Cf. E McDonagh (ed.), *Moral Theology Renewed*, Gill & Son, Dublin, 1965, esp. pp. 13-30.

[4] That moral theology was in need of renewal is beyond doubt and Vatican II gave impetus to this renewal in the Decree on Priestly Formation, *Optatam totius* 16, saying in particular that it should be nourished by Scripture.

> Can they, in effect, ignore the Bible and Christian faith in moral matters: can morality stand on its own legs? Can they expect from Christianity only an interpretation of the human reality of morality: is there any reason for thinking that there is a Christian morality any more than a Christian logic?

One way to address this question might be to ask whether one has to be a Christian to be truly moral. If the answer to this question is an unqualified 'yes', then clearly Christian morality is something entirely unique, and other humanist or secular, or even religious, attempts at moral discernment, are irretrievably flawed, maybe even worthless. Alternatively, if it is accepted that non-Christians can know (something of) moral truth, then there must be an overlap between Christian, humanist and other religious ethics; and arguably the question then becomes rather more interesting. Specifically, what does Christian faith add to a human knowledge of morality? In considering this question, the first step will be to examine possible common ground between Christian ethics and humanist morality, which in principle must be open through the use of reason to believers of all faiths as well as those of none.

Common ground

A key figure in this debate about Christian ethics has been the Jesuit scholar Josef Fuchs, for many years professor of moral theology at the Gregorian University in Rome. For Fuchs:

> The first thing that should be said about Christian morality is this, that it is human morality, in the best sense of the word; that the moral conduct of the Christian must essentially be human.[5]

Similarly, Bernard Haring, in a discussion of moral virtues, can write:

> The other moral virtues are more sharply differentiated from the theological virtues than is the virtue of religion. They

[5] J Fuchs, *Human Values and Christian Morality*, p. 133, cited in G Lobo, *Guide to Christian Living: A New Compendium of Moral Theology*, Christian Classics Inc, Westminster Md, 1986, p. 71.

> do not essentially and necessarily, and never immediately or directly, look to God, respond to God. They have to do with the fulfilment of the created order, with created persons, goods, and values. Since they are directly concerned with created order, they are not in the full religious sense of the word response and responsibility. Response assumes that there is a person to whom response is made. The character of dialogue, response and responsibility to God, comes only when they penetrate through created order to God ... To bring this distinction into clearer relief, we must stress the following points: the moral order is concerned with the fulfilment of the order of creation. It is response to God, the correct response precisely to the extent that man takes his terrestrial tasks seriously, and earnestly accepts created values.[6]

In other words, Haring is arguing that mankind can learn something of the moral order by use of his reason; that he can discover something of moral truth for himself; that he is not entirely dependent upon revelation. This, of course, is the basis of the natural law tradition. But more than this, Haring is claiming that any moral response that is properly human must, of its very nature, be somehow directed to God, even if not explicitly. In the words of the Second Vatican Council:

> The intellectual nature of man finds at last its perfection, as it should, in wisdom, which gently draws the human mind to look for and to love what is true and good. Filled with wisdom man is led through visible realities to those which cannot be seen.[7]

In the light of these comments, it should come as no surprise, then, that the proponents of the autonomous ethic position point to the overlap between the content of Christian ethics and a humanist morality to establish their case that Christian morality has no specifically Christian content. If it is possible to discover some moral truth through the use of one's reason, then it is to be expected that all can agree upon the value

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[6] B Haring, *The Law of Christ: Moral Theology for Priests and Laity Vol. 1 General Moral Theology*, Mercier Press, Cork 1967, p. 47.

[7] The 'Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World', generally referred to by the first words of its Latin text, *Gaudium et Spes*, 15.

of friendship, of honesty, of care for the needy, and the wrongness of adultery. Furthermore, some seemingly Christian ideals can be embraced by non-Christians, such as chastity, as described by Iris Murdoch in her novel, *The Good Apprentice.*

But whilst the proponents of the autonomous ethic school point to the similarity, not to say identity, in content between Christian and humanist ethics, it should not be supposed that they regard Christian faith as irrelevant to the moral endeavour. On the contrary, they do seek to affirm the distinctive nature of Christian ethics, contending that the Christian faith provides a unique context, a unique stimulus, a unique motivation for morality. In other words, Christians seek to behave morally because of their Christian faith, and it is this that gives Christian ethics its distinctive hue.

A SPECIFIC CONTEXT

Typical of the opinions expressed by proponents of the autonomous ethic school is that of John Macquarrie, formerly the Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford University. In his book, *Three Issues in Ethics*, Macquarrie wrote:

> The distinctive element is the special context within which the moral life is perceived. This special context includes the normative place assigned to Jesus Christ and his teaching—not, indeed, as a paradigm for external imitation, but rather as the criterion and inspiration for a style of life.[8]

A similar comment is offered by Josef Fuchs in his book, *Human Values and Christian Morality*:

> This Christian intentionality is what makes the moral behaviour of the Christian truly and specifically Christian, at every moment and in every aspect, even when it appears at first to be simply conforming to human morality.[9]

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[8] J Macquarrie, *Three Issues in Ethics*, p. 89, cited in R McCormick, *Notes on Moral Theology 1965-1980*, University of America Press, Washington DC, 1981, p. 296.

[9] J Fuchs, *Human Values and Christian Morality*, p.124, cited in McCormick, *Notes*, p. 298.

Furthermore, the Christian knows in faith and acknowledges certain realities which he alone can acknowledge: the person of Christ, the Holy Spirit at work in people, the message of salvation, the Church, the Christian community, the sacraments, and the Church's teaching authority. The Christian's relationship to these realities belongs to his being and must be realised in his conduct. This will happen at the level of a deeper and richer motivation.

To assess this view that Christian faith affects ethics only in so far as it provides it with a specific context it will be as well to concentrate for the moment on the views of one author, here Josef Fuchs.

Josef Fuchs and the autonomous ethic

In an article entitled 'Is there a Specifically Christian Morality?',[10] Fuchs wrote:

> Christian morality, in so far as its categorical determination and materiality is concerned, is basically and substantially a human morality, that is a morality for true manhood. That means that truth, honesty and fidelity, in their materiality, are not specifically Christian but universally human values.[11]

Fuchs acknowledges that the Christian will have what he calls a natural obligation to realise some moral demands of which only he is aware, such as obligations to receive the sacraments, to be grateful to Christ, to love God; but for him these issues are not at the heart of the matter. Indeed, he demands that a clear distinction be made between religion and morality, arguing that in the religious field there are specifically Christian realities, but that this is not the case in the moral arena. More specifically, one should not expect to derive new moral content from the Christ-event. Rather one should see that the religious realities, the Christian truths, give a new significance and meaning to morality without changing its content. So, as already seen, the Christian faith situates Christian ethics

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[10] J Fuchs, 'Is there a Specifically Christian Morality?' in C E Curran and R A McCormick, *Readings in Moral Theology No.2: The Distinctiveness of Christian Ethics*, Paulist Press, New York, 1980, pp. 3-19.

[11] Cited in MacNamara, p. 40. MacNamara's analysis of Fuchs will be followed here.

within a particular context, from which the Christian receives a certain motivation, a new inspiration, to act morally. For Fuchs, the morality of the Christian has a specific intentionality, or put another way, the basic reality for the Christian is his relationship to God and morality is important to that relationship.

A concomitant to this view is Fuchs's argument that the Christian understanding of the human person describes the genuinely human order as Christian and that every serious non-Christian morality is participating in Christian morality and, in this sense, is not simply non-Christian. Thus Fuchs holds it to be true, that in choosing a particular moral good, a person chooses goodness, declares and expresses his fundamental option for goodness, and unbeknown to him, chooses the final good, which is God. This, as Fuchs sees it, is the link between morality and union with God; and he argues that it is realised in the life of everyone.

In his argument, Fuchs stresses that it is not through the notion of obligation that an autonomous morality is integrated into the Christian life, but by understanding that God is the Good, the Value, the Ideal, the 'beyond', and the condition of the possibility of human desire. The openness to God, which is exercised through moral choice, is the Christian meaning and context of mankind's freedom. This is an approach that accommodates well a theory of an autonomous morality within a Christian context. Because of its understanding of the person as by nature open to transcendence and of human choice involving the choice of the corresponding pole of the transcendence, namely the Absolute, God, it is able to endorse the autonomy of morality and, at the same time, understand the total Christian context. Such an argument rests on Aquinas's dictum that 'grace perfects nature', as opposed to changing it substantially.

As noted above, Fuchs regards specifically Christian duties, such as acts of prayer, cult, contemplation, faith, hope and love, as belonging to religion, rather than to morality itself, but that they do provide a motivation to act morally. Such a distinction, central as it is to the autonomy school, is perhaps not, however, as easily made as its proponents might wish, and indeed Fuchs does not always seem to have kept the two rigidly apart.

The problem for those who support the idea of an autonomous ethic seems to be that there are some considerations mentioned by them under the heading of motivation, which are really justifying reasons for a moral judgement. This issue needs some clarification. To state, as Fuchs often does, that Christianity gives one a motive for virginity is not entirely

accurate. Motive has to do with desire, but that is not all that is involved here; there is something more fundamental. Christianity may indeed give the desire for virginity, but more than that, it also gives a reason why virginity is a good moral choice. Although non-Christians can and do choose virginity as a moral good, Christian belief adds to the understanding of the act. The same applies to other such judgements mentioned by Fuchs, regarding poverty, self-sacrifice and non-resistance. As MacNamara notes: 'In this context, religious belief is not just motivation but the ground of the judgements.'[12]

Fuchs does refer to the 'further dimension' that Christianity gives to insight into moral decisions and specifically to the worth of one's neighbour. Christian motivation and intentionality, he says, penetrate the content and give it a more profound and Christian value. It seems, however, that it would be better to say that the realities of faith enable one to see the ground of moral judgement more clearly. Insight into the value of an individual may be available to all, but the Christian has a further perspective on the worth of each one, and a greater reason for arriving at his judgement about how each one should be respected. This does not mean, of course, that a non-Christian cannot arrive at the same judgement as a Christian, but that the Christian has a fuller understanding of the action itself. Motive and action cannot be kept rigidly distinct.

In contrast to Fuchs, supporters of a *Glaubensethik* argue that the Christian faith does add content to Christian ethics. In other words, that belief in Christ causes the Christian to act in particular ways, which he regards as morally good, but which to non-believers cannot be justified as morally good actions. This view was neatly summarised in the Jesuit publication *La Civiltà Cattolica*, which stated that faith and grace characterise Christian morality, and that they will necessarily 'translate themselves into new moral conduct and new commands',[13] such as love of enemies, non-resistance to the wicked, renunciation of wealth, love of the cross, and the value of virginity. Such a view has found support across the religious spectrum in the shape of such noted ethicists as the Methodist Stanley Hauerwas, Professor of Ethics at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, in his book *The Peaceable Kingdom*,[14] and the Lutheran James

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 106.

[13] Cited in McCormick, *Notes*, p. 428.

[14] S Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, 1983.

Gustafson, Professor of Theological Ethics at the University of Chicago, in *Can Ethics be Christian?*[15] For the sake of clarity, however, the discussion will concentrate mainly upon one scholar, Norbert Rigali, whose more recent writings take account of the works of the authors just mentioned.

Norbert Rigali and the *Glaubensethik*

In an article in *Louvain Studies*,[16] Rigali argued that the debate about the specificity of Christian ethics 'disclose[s] not only conflicting theologies but also different understandings of ethics itself.'[17] He noted that traditional Catholic moral theology after the Council of Trent (1545-1563) 'has been focused on individual human acts with their accompanying intentions and circumstances'[18] and that 'the business of moral theology was seen as determining the universal moral natures of human acts, and the objective norm against which they are to be measured was considered to be *natura humana complete spectata*, universal human nature in its fullness.'[19] According to this approach, based heavily on natural law, Christian ethics has no specifically Christian material content, but does have a particular stimulus, context, and motivation. Rigali challenges this autonomous ethic position, citing with approval the work of Gustafson and Hauerwas.

Rigali accepts Gustafson's rejection of the position that 'ethics is ethics only when the basic criterion of judgement is whether all rational and disinterested persons could agree on the principles developed' and that ethics exists within a larger realm that includes the Christian community grounded 'in an historical event', whose 'history and conduct are to be determined by that historical revelation.'[20]

Gustafson does propose a form of natural law theory, though 'weaker' than that found generally within the Catholic tradition, maintaining that: 'generalities about the moral values and principles which provide the conditions *sine qua non* for human personal and social life can be made.' Although he thinks that 'the conditions of knowledge do

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[15] J M Gustafson, *Can Ethics be Christian?*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1975.

[16] N J Rigali, 'Moral Pluralism and Christian Ethics' in *Louvain Studies*, Winter 1988, pp. 305-21.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 305.

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 306.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 307.

not exist on which universality and absoluteness can be claimed without qualification', he regards it as possible to formulate 'almost universal' and 'almost absolute' principles and values. Therefore, 'Christian ethics (in terms not only of action-guiding principles and values, but also in terms of justifications for these) can in large measure be converted into "natural" or "rational" ethics.' Nevertheless, he argues that in Christian ethics there is what he calls a significant 'remainder', both in the area of the sort of person one becomes through and in that of particular obligations.[21] Thus for Gustafson, faith in Jesus Christ makes a difference to the moral life of the Christian in terms of its content.

Hauerwas takes this line of argument further, not only rejecting a particular form of the natural law tradition, but, more fundamentally, the very notion of a natural, universal, moral law. He acknowledges that his position is:

> deeply at odds with the main direction of modern ethical theory, which seeks a foundation for morality that will free moral judgements from their dependence on historically contingent communities,
>
> but insists that 'there is no such thing as universal ethics.[22]

Hauerwas's case is that ethics is 'an activity relative to particular times, places and communities' and that 'the very nature and structure of ethics is determined by the particularities of a community's history and convictions.' He states:

> Christian ethics does not, methodologically, have a starting point. The dilemma of whether we must do Christian ethics out of a doctrine of God or of man is a false one. For Christian ethics begins in a community that carries the story of the God who wills us to participate in a kingdom established in and through Jesus of Nazareth. No matter where it begins theologically, if it tries to do more or less than remind us of the significance of the story it has lost its way.[23]

For Rigali, the obvious conclusion to draw is that ethics based upon a supposed universal human nature is to be rejected, and this on the

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[21] *Ibid.*

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 308.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 309.

grounds that individuals and groups are conditioned by their own story. The classicist, natural law, theory of ethics should be abandoned in favour of an historically conscious perspective. He states:

> That the question of a specifically Christian ethic has been understood as a question of whether Christian ethics is different from 'human' ethics is itself, then, a phenomenon of classicist consciousness, which sees in the question a query as to whether Christianity brings any rules of behaviour to improve on those that flow from universal human nature and bind all human beings.[24]

Hence Rigali cites with approval the view of Daniel Maguire that:

> the term 'human morality' makes no sense. It is adrift, like a man without a country. Morality does not exist without a distinctive context and history.... It does not emerge from a cultural void. If it is authentic morality, it is human, but that does not say enough. It will be in many ways distinctive and specific. Humanity does not exist in unspecified generality. Neither does ethics—the art-science of the human. An ethic will be Mahayana Cambodian Buddhist or early Trobriander, medieval French Catholic or Swiss nineteenth-century Calvinist.[25]

Thus, Rigali would agree with Fuchs that Christian morality is human morality, but that would not be a sufficient description of it for him. Christian morality is human, because Christians are human, but it is also a morality quite distinct from other moralities, as each grows out of its own particular historical consciousness, conditioned and formed by its own story. On the difference between the two positions, Rigali comments:

> while historical consciousness sees the foundation of ethics in the particular stories of historical communities, classicist consciousness understands ethics to be directly founded on universal human nature

and:

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[24] *Ibid.*, p. 310.

[25] *Ibid.*

> since human nature is a unity and stories are a plurality, ethics is one for classicist consciousness and many for historical consciousness.[26]

Rigali does not want to reject the value of a natural law approach to morality, but suggests that there is more to ethics than reading off a list of either morally good or bad actions from an examination of human nature. He says:

> Historically conscious theology, then, does not have to deny the natural law of morality any more than it denies the dogmas of Christian faith. But as any dogmatic formulation, like each of the four Gospels themselves, cannot be separated from its particular, historical Sitz im Leben, so also all expressions of the natural 'norm deep within every human soul' contain an historical coefficient of relativity.[27]

From this it can be inferred, that for Rigali, there is a specifically Christian ethic, because Christians learn their morality within a particular community, itself formed by a particular story. Thus there will be certain actions, which will be regarded as either morally good or bad, because of an adherence to the Christian belief. Phrased differently, but making the same point, is Tettamanzi's view that the 'newness that characterises the Christian as a "new creature in Christ" cannot fail to appear in "newness" of conduct.'[28]

Attractive as Rigali's position is, in as much as it makes plain the undoubted influence that Christian faith exercises upon Christian ethics, it does not seem to be altogether satisfactory. Despite his protestation that he does not wish to dismiss the valuable insights of natural law theory, it would seem that he so relativises the insights gained thereby, as to reduce significantly their value in any attempt to formulate a morality based upon a belief in Goodness and Truth. That this is so becomes clear in an article of his in *Chicago Studies*, entitled 'The Story of Christian Morality'.

In this article, Rigali begins by asserting that Jesus is the norm for the Christian moral life, and that this is what makes Christian ethics distinctively Christian. He criticises the view that Christian morality is

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[26] *Ibid.*, p. 313.
[27] *Ibid.*, p.314.
[28] Cited in McCormick, *Notes*, p. 429.

not unique, since non-Christians can arrive at the same moral norms and decisions as Christians on a purely secular basis. This he says is:

> not unlike saying that there is nothing unique about Shakespeare's *Hamlet* since, in principle, every word of it could also be used in other literary works and every human characteristic, emotion and relationship portrayed in the play could be depicted elsewhere as well. Two of the several weaknesses of the answer are that it confuses a question of fact with a question of principle and substitutes a sum of parts for a whole. Both of these deficiencies, moreover, are rooted in the loss of the Christian story.[29]

Whilst this is a helpful comment insofar as it identifies a weakness in the autonomous ethic position, this line of argument leads Rigali to the conclusion that moralities and ethics, like plays, are 'human creations' and that 'morality is thus an essentially social creation.'[30] But if he is correct in this, then it is difficult to see why an individual, religious believer or not, should choose to conform to a particular ethical code, as all are necessarily subjective (so, not established on a firm rational basis) and, from the believer's perspective, do not in some sense represent the will of God, however the relationship between faith and morality might be conceived. Christians choose to behave in a particular way because of their faith, which they believe to be revealed and to be true, and to give them guidance in how they live their lives practically in response to God's offer of salvation and eternal life in Christ. Rigali's position would seem to undermine this, and to lead to the proposition condemned by Newman in his *Apologia*, viz. that there is no positive truth in religion;[31] a proposition, which, if it is true, would severely weaken, if not shipwreck, the whole ethical enterprise.

More positively, however, Rigali demonstrates the importance of the story of Jesus not just for the Christian's spiritual life, but for his moral standpoint and action, highlighting the importance of the demands of ascetical theology for the moral life:

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[29] N J Rigali, 'The Story of Christian Morality' in *Chicago Studies* vol. 27/2, 1988, pp. 174–5.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 175.

[31] J H Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua: Being a History of His Religious Opinions*: edited and with an Introduction by M J Svaglic, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990, pp. 254–62.

> The story of Jesus is not simply another reason to spur Christians to live a good life as determined by standards quite independent of the story. It is, rather, the model according to which each Christian is called to live his or her own life.[32]

To summarise the argument so far, then, it can be noted that the proponents of an autonomous ethic, basing their views on a strong natural law tradition, argue that Christian morality has no specific content, that the content of Christian ethics can be arrived at by non-Christians in their ethical reasoning, but that Christianity morality is distinct from a secular, humanist, ethic, because the Christian faith provides a unique motivation, a particular intentionality, for moral behaviour. In contrast to this, supporters of a *Glaubensethik*, or a faith-ethic, argue that the Christian faith, the Christian story lived within a particular historical community, must so affect the conduct of Christian believers, as to result in specifically Christian ways of acting, in other words in a specifically Christian content to ethics.

When expressed in extreme form, these two schools of thought do indeed stand in marked contrast to each other. It is not necessarily the case, however, that this must be so, as a consideration of St Paul's views on fornication in 1 Corinthians will serve to indicate.

A POSSIBLE SYNTHESIS

The above discussion identified strengths and weaknesses in both the autonomy position and the faith-ethic. The purpose of this part of the essay is to attempt something of a reconciliation between the two schools of thought.

Whilst Fuchs appears to be correct in his argument that non-Christians can arrive at the same ethical judgements as Christians, it does not seem at all clear that Christian considerations enter moral judgement only in the area of context, motive and stimulus, but do not enter into the analysis of the act as such. An examination of 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 would seem to bear this out.[33] Here St Paul uses Christian considerations to good

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[32] Rigali, 'Story of Christian Morality', p. 178.

[33] I am indebted to J Butters for this analysis in his unpublished paper, 'The Specificity of Christian Ethics—Yet Again', which forms the basis for the analysis contained herein.

effect in his moral reasoning: first, he states that Christians should care for the body because it is for the Lord and will be raised by Him; secondly, it is wrong to have intercourse with a prostitute because that makes a member of Christ's body one flesh with her; and, thirdly, immorality should be shunned because the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

All of these considerations arise out of the Christian story; they are an expression of Christian experience, and it is this experience that leads St Paul to think of fornication as he does. The question is, 'Do these considerations operate at the level of context and motivation only?' That they do operate as context and motive is beyond question, but this does not appear to be their sole function. That the body belongs to the Lord, is a member of the Lord and a temple of the Holy Spirit, is a fact, and this fact reveals part of what fornication really is, namely uniting Christ's member with a prostitute, defiling the temple of the Holy Spirit. This is, in part, why it is wrong, and why it should be rejected. If one were to shun fornication to avoid an unwanted possible consequence, e.g., punishment, such as a beating by an irate father, this would be a motive distinct from its object, a motive distinct from the act itself. But in 1 Corinthians, the considerations advanced by St Paul actually illuminate the very nature of fornication, and thus point to the strength of the argument of the faith-ethic school in seeking to identify a particularly distinctive Christian character to the content of Christian ethics.

It is not only Christian considerations, however, which should lead to the conclusion that fornication should be avoided. A sense of the dignity of sexual love should lead a person of discernment to that view, whether he is a Christian or not. Indeed, such a 'human' understanding of fornication gives the core reason for its wrongness, but the Christian has a fuller realisation of the full meaning of fornication and therefore of what he would be doing were he to fornicate. The Christian considerations do not change the moral judgement to make it a different judgement, but they do reveal the further reaches of the grounds for the same judgement. This is why the main thrust of Fuchs and the autonomy school's arguments are acceptable: a truly human morality should lead one to avoid fornication. But, the proponents of the *Glaubensethik* are correct in saying that Christian considerations do not operate only at the level of motivation and context; they actually have some bearing on the nature of the action itself, and can therefore be said to illuminate the content of Christian ethics.

To take this point further, a sufficient, humanist, knowledge of man would reveal the wrongness of adultery, slavery, fornication, murder, and many other immoral acts. It would give rise to an appreciation of human dignity, truth, justice, love, etc. This insight has found its expression in Christian theology through an appeal to the natural law tradition. A theological knowledge of man would not change this morality, but would make its conclusions even more evident and would give further reasons for them. Whilst the difficulty of arriving at a sufficiently accurate knowledge of man in a world full of varied and, at times bizarre, influences, cannot be overlooked, the principle at stake here remains true; and on this basis, the Christian moral tradition can seek to address genuine human concerns as a believing community in a language also accessible to non-believers.

Conclusion

The debate about the distinctiveness of Christian ethics is complex and, broadly speaking, exhibits a tension between the autonomous ethic position and the supporters of a faith-ethic. On the one hand, scholars such as Fuchs maintain that the Christian faith affects Christian ethics only insofar as providing a unique intentionality. On the other hand, Rigali and others wish to emphasise the importance of the Christian story in making moral judgements. The contention of this paper has been that these two positions are not necessarily irreconcilable and the following comments are offered by way of conclusion.

1. The autonomy school seems to be correct in asserting that there is no specifically Christian content to ethics, but its claim that Christian considerations provide only a motivation for ethical behaviour appears to be of doubtful value, because it obscures the way in which they enter into moral reasoning.

2. The wider one's horizons, the more clearly one can see the real meaning of an action, and so Christian teaching will highlight their goodness or badness, i.e., they illuminate the natural law.

3. When discussing moral issues with non-Christians, some measure of agreement can be hoped for, but when searching

for the solution to a moral dilemma, Christians should appeal to Christian considerations, to which they would not appeal in discussion with non-Christians. It would be interesting to see to what extent Christian and Muslim considerations might overlap.

4. Christian considerations should influence all areas of moral theology.

In the Name of God

FAITH AND MORALITY IN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

Mohammad Fanaei Eshkevari

Knowledge and practice

Human perfection comes through knowledge and practice. In other words, man's being is due to his knowing and doing. The human being is not a fixed creature. He is an uncompleted project. What he will be is different from what he is. What he will be is, to a large extent, due to his own efforts. This difference takes place by his knowledge and action. Thus, knowledge and practice are two wings by which the human can fly in the sky of perfection. Hence, we can say that in human beings knowing and doing together form their being.

The middle term that joins these two is an emotional element: will, desire, eagerness, love, commitment etc., or more than one of them. Thus, one's personality is shaped by three major elements: epistemic, emotional, and practical. It corresponds to three dimensions of human being: mind, heart, and body. The domain of the mind is knowledge; the one of the heart is love; and the one of the body is action.

Because of the distinction between knowledge and practice or the theoretical dimension and the practical dimension, two types of knowledge or studies are recognized in different areas of human concern. It is the difference between 'knowing *that*' and 'knowing *how*'. For example, knowing *about* swimming is different from knowing *how* to swim. In philosophy speculative or theoretical philosophy or wisdom *(hikmat-i nazari)*, such as metaphysics, is distinguished from practical philosophy or wisdom *(hikmat-i 'amali)*, like ethics. This distinction is found in other disciplines and sciences as well. We have the 'pure sciences' like physics and mathematics, and the 'applied sciences,' such as medicine, engineering, etc.

In Islamic mysticism (*'irfan)* theoretical or speculative mysticism is distinguished from practical mysticism. Speculative mysticism *('irfan-i nazari)* is similar in many regards to metaphysics and deals with topics

such as God, Man, and the Afterlife. Practical mysticism *('irfan-i 'amali)* is more concerned with the external and inner practices of mystics, such as prayer, fasting and meditation.

In the field of religious studies, too, scholars recognize these two aspects. One can differentiate between theoretical theology and practical theology. From the Islamic perspective an authentic religion contains two types of teachings: theoretical and practical. It offers a worldview, i.e., a body of teachings concerning God, the world, the nature and destiny of human being, and the relation of the world in general to God and that of the human soul in particular to God. On the bases of such a worldview, it also offers a way of life, teaching a human being how to build his personality, correct his relation to God and other creatures in general and his fellow human beings in particular.[1]

Human salvation *(falah)*, i.e., its real and ultimate happiness, is his happiness in the hereafter. This happiness depends on the way one lives. Religion gives us the reason for which we live. It gives meaning to life. It gives us something that nothing else can give us: real happiness *(sa'adat)* and salvation. Salvation is the ultimate and eternal happiness that can never be lost. Only a religious life, i.e., a life according to the will of God, which includes in itself a moral life, leads to salvation.

True beliefs and righteous deeds

For a positive response to religion, we need both reason *('aql)* and faith *(iman)*. Reason is a faculty by which we are able to understand the truths and relevance of religion. And faith is belief and absolute submission to God that manifests itself in the belief and commitment to the religious teachings, such as belief in God, revelation and life after death. However, religiosity/piety is not only having a body of belief; rather one of its essential components is living according to these beliefs, i.e., morality and praxis. This is what the Qur'an calls righteous deed *(al-'amal al-salih)*. Therefore, from the Islamic perspective having true beliefs alone is not enough for salvation; rather righteous deeds are also necessary. The Qur'an is clear in this regard:

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[1] This in its generality seems to be common to all Abrahamic religions, i.e., Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

> Surely Man is in loss, save those who believe, and do righteous deeds, and counsel each other unto the truth, and counsel each other to be steadfast.[2]

Belief in God leads to obedience to God. As our hearts respond to God in love, our behaviour will respond in obedience to God. When there is no obedience, although there may be a desire to love God, real love of God is not present. A sincere believer must obey commands of God or religious law, what is obligatory and what is forbidden.

According to the Qur'anic teachings, obedience to God requires two categories of commitments or duties: duties with regard to God and duties with regard to the creatures. Our duty with regard to God is to worship him, and our duty with regard to creatures is to serve them *(al-khidmah)*. In other word, obedience to God requires these two types of practices, i.e., purely spiritual observances, like prayer, and moral/social duties such as alms giving.

Morality requires loving, caring and serving any living being. As we see in Islamic teaching, this is part of religious life and an inevitable condition for salvation. Thus, a genuine believer cannot be indifferent with regard to the well being of others; rather he/she should be an active member of society. These points and related issues about essential elements of Islam and its end are outlined in the following verses of the Holy Qur'an:

> That is the Book, wherein is no doubt, a guidance to the Godfearing who believe in the Unseen, and perform the prayer, and expend of that We have provided them; who believe in what has been sent down to thee and what has been sent down before thee, and have faith in the hereafter; those are upon guidance from their Lord, those are the ones who prosper.[3]

These verses contain the main elements of the Islamic belief system. For a Muslim, these verses answer the question 'What is religion all about?' This passage contains the outlines of Islamic teachings. Reflecting on these verses, one can find the answers to the fundamental questions regarding the Islamic revelation.

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[2] *The Qur'an*, CIII, trans. A Arberry.

[3] *The Qur'an*, II: 2-5 .

First it describes the Qur'an. Since it is sent by God, and received by the infallible prophet, there is no doubt in it. There is no doubt that it is the word of God, and there is no doubt in its content.

What is the Qur'an for? It is the book of guidance; however, it guides only Godfearers. The Qur'anic revelation provides guidance for a meaningful life, for those who want to be guided, i.e., the Godfearing. It gives us guidance in what to believe and how to behave. It provides guidelines for the spiritual development of personality and eventually its salvation.

The essential elements of religion

Religion is not only a system of belief, or merely feeling a supernatural reality in one's heart, or only a moral system, or only an otherworldly spiritual teaching. According to the verses quoted above, religion is a system of life comprised of two elements: faith/belief, and practice.

Faith

Faith, or belief, in the unseen *(ghayb)*, a domain of reality that is beyond perception of our physical senses, is the cornerstone of religion. God Himself is the ultimate unseen, and to believe in Him is the essence of religion. In addition, belief in other unseen realities and events including angels, the Day of Judgment, the Qur'anic revelation and the revelations to the previous prophets is an essential element of religiosity. Thus, faith is indispensable to religion.

Practice Type I: Direct worship of God

According to the Qur'an, religion is not merely a system of belief—it is a way of life. Practice is vital to religion. True belief in something is to have one's personality and life changed. Our beliefs must shape our lives—they are not merely items of information that we know in a shallow way. Belief is a kind of knowledge and commitment that changes us. Religious belief has a crucial impact on one's behaviour. One of the characteristics of a religious belief is its practical consequences. We can

know about a star, but this knowledge may not have any effect in our life. However, to know God will have an affect on our personality and our way of living. We cannot be indifferent with regard to our belief in God.

What kind of reaction do we have to knowing God? Belief in God requires worshipping God. First, because He is perfect in an absolute sense and deserves to be worshipped, and second, because He is the source of all good and beauties. Whatever we have is from God, including our existence, life and all equipments of life. Prayer is an example of the practice of worshipping God. So worship is our response to faith.

A question arises here whether our beliefs are means for other purposes or they are by themselves goals. The common view may be that belief in God and the afterlife are means to a better life and to salvation. But is that all?

Islamic thought especially in its mystical understanding does not prefer such means-goal type of distinctions. God is not a mere means to another goal (be it happiness, salvation, etc.); rather, He is the ultimate goal. It goes beyond this distinction and transcends this dichotomy. Knowing God and belief in Him are by themselves goals and not merely means to something else.

So, knowledge of God is the thing we want, it is an end. But it is not the only thing that we want. More than anything it is the relationship with God that we seek. This is of course not separate from belief and knowledge. Going to Heaven is also what we want but this is not the main reason to seek knowledge of God. In fact, belief in God and connection to Him is the ultimate goal that includes in itself all other goals. He is the End of all ends *(ghayat al-ghayat)*.

Practice Type II: Loving/serving others

Religious belief results in worship and prayer, but is that enough? No. Serving others is another kind of practice. This service *(khidmat)* is also vital to faith, and is also a kind of obedience. It is about how to deal with other creatures in general and people in particular. As we have duties with regards to God, we have duties with regards to other living beings especially our fellow human beings. Every member of a community obliged to participate in the praxis of the community. We have to correct both our

vertical relation—our relation to God—and our horizontal relation—our relation to God's creatures.

The Qur'an says that believers perform prayer and expend of that God has provided for them; that is, they are not indifferent with regard to people. They have a duty and responsibility to others. An example of our response to this duty and a major component of practice is the act of charity.

Sincerity versus hypocrisy

From the Islamic view, in all sorts of religious/spiritual/moral practice, intention is essential, that is, the apparent physical action is not the whole thing; rather, the spirit of the action is the intention of the agent. Three elements are involved here: knowledge, intention and action. The mind, heart and body all play their roles. Religiosity covers all aspects of human being. They all are dependent on God and must work together in devotion to God. The real subject of reward and retribution, praise and blame is intention. An action is an act of worship only if it is done for the sake of God. Sometimes the value of a good work is destroyed by an intention for self-glory. If for example in prayer, our intentions are not pure—if we act out of hypocrisy (to show off)—this destroys our prayers. Sincerity or purity *(ikhlas)* is the opposite. It means doing something purely for God. Anything that we do for God and his glory is worship. We are rewarded for our good intentions. However, according to a hadith God has said that because of His mercy, God does not punish our bad intentions.

This focus on intention is a crucial difference between religious and secular ethics. The spirit of an act, not only the physics of act, determines whether or not that act is a religious/moral act. Accordingly, serving others for the sake of God is also obeying God and an act of worshipping.

Faith and immorality

The separation between belief and practice is not admitted, though conceptually they are distinct. Neither is one separate from the other, nor is one only a means to the other; they are intertwined. Our religious texts

tell us that there is a connection between faith and morality: faith should make us better people, and our society a better one. However, the question that rises here is why there are some people who have faith but do not care much about morality. So, here we have to deal with the question of people who profess faith in God but do not live moral lives.

Few options can be given for these kinds of people. One possibility is that they could simply be hypocrites and have no real faith at all. They only say that they have faith, but the lack of a moral life shows that they do not.

However, often it is due to bad education, theological misconceptions, selfishness, pride, etc. Egoism and self-centredness, attachment to this world and weakness of will lead to immorality.

A person could have some faith and that faith could be keeping him from living more immorally than he already is. Faith comes in degrees and some people have such weak faith and such a bad propensity towards evil that they still appear a bad person to society at large, but it does not necessarily mean they have no faith, only that their faith is very weak. People have varying degrees of faith, and faith can strengthen or weaken.

A religious device in promoting morality and action is to fight against the sources of immorality. The source of all injustice and misdeeds is egoism, that is, following one's own desires. One way that people become immoral is that they see a conflict between their pleasure/desires and virtue/truth. Initially, being good seems to entail sacrifice. But what faith does is to remove this conflict. Faith tells us that in being good we lose nothing—that in the end and overall we gain. True happiness and joy is found in doing what is right.

For a moral life we need to strengthen our faith. How can we improve our faith? There are many things to do. The remembrance of God *(dhikr al-Allah)* is incredibly important to faith. If we remember that God knows everything and is present everywhere, we would not disobey Him. Sin is the result of the negligence *(ghaflat)* of God, and this remembrance is the opposite of such negligence. Remembering death is also important in helping us strengthen our faith and promoting good works. In remembering death we realize that we will face the consequences of our actions in the Day of Judgement.

Religious teachings tell us that we are all created by God and return back to Him, therefore, we all have a common origination and

destination, a common ground and common values. We are all children of one family. In a letter to Malik Ashtar, who was appointed as the governor of Egypt, Imam ʿAli said treat people kindly, and 'do not stand over them like greedy beasts who feel it is enough to devour them, since they are of two kinds, either your brother in faith or like you in creation.'[4] As we see, beside faith one needs training and exercising religious piety in order to easily follow the moral life.

The separation between self-love and love for others is naive. One may have both at the same time. In being moral you do not lose anything of value. Morality at the beginning is about apparent self-sacrifice, but you do not lose. To think that being moral requires loss or misery is a superficial and erroneous way of thinking. A similar example is sport. To succeed in a sport one needs to undergo lots of hardship and give up some of one's rest. But the athlete sees the bigger picture—that these apparent deprivations are not really deprivations at all, but just part of achieving a greater good.

The materialistic idea of morality and human rights, however, lacks such common grounds. Without God there is no solid common ground that human beings share. There is no satisfactory explanation to remove the prima-facie conflict between self-love and other-love. Therefore, materialistic views of morality and human rights contain a paradox. Morality should be like drinking a sweet juice, not like taking a bitter pill. Only religious faith has this miracle.

In Christianity

The relation between faith and practice is a good topic for Muslim-Christian dialogue. It seems that in principle there is a common stand between these two religions. Christianity typically views faith as something prior to and necessarily resulting in morality. Anyone who has true faith will act morally. In John (chapter 14: 15), Jesus is recorded saying, 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments.' It is a simple formula. True love and faith in Jesus and his message will naturally result in improved moral character. In the same chapter the same idea is stated in another

[4] Imam ʿAli ibn Abi Talib, *Nahj ul-Balaghah*, Ahlul-Bayt Assembly, Maryland, 1996. Letter 53, p. 239.

way, 'He who has my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me' (verse 21). This corresponds with another famous analogy found in Jesus' teachings—that the relationship between faith and works (or the moral life) is like a tree and its fruit. You can tell what kind of tree a given tree is by the fruit it bears. The same is true about people. People of faith produce the fruit of morality (see Matthew 7: 16–20).

Another analogy often given in Christian teaching is the relationship between fire and smoke. Fire always produces smoke. It cannot do otherwise. If there is a fire, there must be smoke. The fire is like faith and the smoke is like good works.

James, the brother of Jesus (Gal 1: 19) and leader of the Church in Jerusalem until his death, writes that, 'as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead' (James 2: 26). This means that a person whose faith does not result in moral conduct has a dead, or not real, faith. James says in the same chapter that faith is perfected by works (verse 22) and that faith without works is useless (verse 20).

It is clear in these teachings that faith in God must and will always result in a moral lifestyle. It cannot be otherwise.

The contemplation-action debate

It may be argued that according to Christianity, faith is all that religion is about. As St Paul noticed, faith in divine forgiveness leads to salvation, and there is no room for human action. Righteous deeds are worthless for salvation. According to this idea, known as antinomianism, faith is necessary and sufficient for salvation, and work is neither necessary nor sufficient.

On the basis of this understanding, some Christian mystics have preferred contemplation and exalted feelings to action. The story of Martha and Mary, in the New Testament, tells us that Martha, who serves people, is spiritually lower than Mary, who lives a purely contemplative life. Thus, 'While charitable acts are good, pious thoughts entertaining religious imagery are better, and the passive state of union with God, mediated by no acts, or imagery, is best of all.'[5]

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[5] James R Horn, *The Moral Mystic*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo, 1983, pp. 4 and 5.

On the basis of this Biblical story, Augustine argues that the contemplative life is superior to the active life, because 'what Martha chose passes away ... there will be when none will hunger nor thirst. Therefore, will her care be taken from her.'[6] Whereas, Mary's part, that is contemplation, shall not be taken from her. The object of action is temporal, while the object of contemplation is eternal which is superior. According to St Maximus the Confessor (c. 580–662), the person with a contemplative life prays 'from burning divine love and maximum purification,'[7] whereas the person with active life prays out of fear and hope. In this line of thinking some went so far that claimed: 'The demands of salvation and the demands of morality are not automatically and simultaneously fulfilled, and they may even be antithetical.'[8]

However, it seems that we need to rethink this understanding. If it is taken as mentioned, it would not be consistent with the principal teachings of Christianity, according to which love of God is not separate from the love of neighbour. Love of God entails love of all creatures. Of course, our love of God and creatures are not at the same level.

Contrary to those who accuse mystics of escapism, and having not active life, Evelyn Underhill states that mystical life, 'Shall not be abstract and dreamy, made up, as some imagine, of negations. It shall be violently practical and affirmative; giving scope for a limitless activity of will, heart, and mind working within the rhythms of divine Idea ... [and making] the inner and outer worlds to be indivisibly One ... Even under the most favourable circumstances, you shall and must move easily and frequently between that spiritual fruition and active work in the world of men.'[9]

It is true that some mystics have underestimated the importance of active life, however, some others, such as St Thomas, prefer the active life over the contemplative life. They think that active life is better than the contemplative one because in contemplation, you serve only yourself, but in good works, you serve others. The mystic John Ruysbroeck 'emphasized the necessity of self-purification and of the performance of good works as a preparation for an interior life of virtue in which the powers of the soul, intellect and will, can turn themselves, under the attracting influence of grace, to the indwelling God. The higher stage of mystical contemplation

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[6] Dom Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism*, Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1966, p. 160.

[7] Elmer O'Brien. *Varieties of Mystic Experience*. Amentor Omega Book, New York, 1964, p. 80.

[8] Arthur C Danto. *Mysticism and Morality*. Harper and Row, New York, 1972, p. 82.

[9] Evelyn Underhill, *Practical Mysticism*, E P Dutton, New York, 1915, pp. 160 and 161.

and union with God, which can be attained only through divine grace and not simply by human effort, expresses itself in a life of good works which flow from this union and are informed by it.'[10]

Even those who prefer contemplation over action, like Augustine, admit the superiority of a mixed life. In their view, the combination of contemplation and action is the best. Meister Eckhart states: 'What a man takes in contemplation he must pour out in love. If a man was in rapture such as St Paul experienced, and if he knew a person who needed something of him, I think it would be better out of love to leave the rapture and serve the needy man. It is better to feed the hungry than to see even such visions as St Paul saw.'[11] 'The preparation for mystical communion', says Bernard, entails 'good works ... peace, gentleness, justice, obedience, cheerfulness.' Prayer and contemplation without deeds of mercy on behalf of the needy friend are "inane idleness".'[12]

Hence, one can claim that the combination of faith and praxis or contemplation and action, is closer to the ideals of Christian life. Therefore, we can conclude that faith and praxis, pure heart and righteous deed, and worshiping God and serving people are required in both Islam and Christianity, and in fact in all Abrahamic religions.

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[10] Frederick C Copleston, *A History of Medieval Philosophy*, University of Notre Dame Press, London, 1972, p. 286.

[11] Walter T Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy*. Macmillan and Co., London, 1961, p. 338.

[12] Valdo Beach and Richard Nibebuhr, *Christian Ethics: Sources of the Living Tradition*, The Ronald Press Company, New York: 1973, p. 179.

THEOCENTRIC ETHICS IN ISLAM: FROM SPIRITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS TO MORAL CONSCIENCE

Reza Shah-Kazemi

By the term 'theocentric ethics' we mean not so much a systematic philosophy of ethics, centred on a particular conception of God; rather, what is intended is a spiritual orientation towards the divine nature, an orientation which generates ethical sensibility and moral rectitude, doing so in the measure of the accuracy of the perception of the divine nature, and in particular, according to the depth of the intuition of the beauty of God. This perception of the divine nature—or consciousness of the ultimate reality—is the deepest foundation of moral comportment: spiritual consciousness, in other words, fashions moral conscience. Veracity on the level of metaphysics carries in its wake sincerity on the level of ethics. What follows is a preliminary sketch of this view of the spiritual—and one might say, 'aesthetic'—foundations of moral praxis in the metaphysical, mystical and visionary traditions of Islam.[1]

Having stated the basic argument of this paper, it is necessary to respond to an objection that might be made at this point: surely, it will be argued, moral conscience *precedes* spiritual consciousness, in that one is first taught basic moral rules and ethical principles, and then one gradually acquires a sense of higher spiritual and metaphysical realities.

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[1] These esoteric dimensions of Islam are expressed within both Shi'a and Sunni branches of the faith, in the form of 'Irfān and Sufism, respectively. It is also true, however, that even in its formal exoteric structure, Shi'ism contains features that are akin to that which is found expressed within Sunni esoterism. According to Henry Corbin, the 'great themes of Sufism are those of Shi'ism, beginning with the fundamental distinction between the Law *(al-sharī'a)* and spiritual Reality *(al-ḥaqīqa)*, and continuing with the polarity of *ẓāhir* [outer, apparent, exoteric] and *bāṭin* [inner, hidden, esoteric], the idea of the cycle of *walāyah* [sanctity] in hierohistory following on the cycle of prophecy. The idea of the *quṭb* or mystical pole, in Sunnī Sufism is simply the translation of the Shiite idea of the Imām ...' Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, tr. Philip Sherrard, London, 1993, p. 191.
For a more nuanced approach to this issue, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 'Shi'ism and Sufism: their Relationship in Essence and in History', in *Sufi Essays*, London, 1972.

While this is evidently true as an empirical observation of the process of individual development, the argument misses the point that, in principle, it is the actual nature of the Good as such, rather than such and such a good, that determines the moral vision of right and wrong, that vision which is imparted by the teacher—whether the latter be a prophet, saint, elder or parent. This vision contains a moral dimension but is determined essentially by a particular worldview, in which a notion of ultimate reality is heavily implicit.[2] Thus, in a religious context, the view of the Good, or the Absolute, takes priority over morality in the very measure that the principle takes priority over its manifestations, and essence over its forms.

One particularly important aspect of the divine nature as regard our discussion here is expressed in the following definitive statement by the Prophet about the nature of God: 'Truly, God is beautiful and He loves beauty.'[3] The word used for beauty here is *Jamāl*, one of the divine names being *al-Jamīl*, 'the Beautiful'. It should be noted that the divine names—traditionally 99 in number—are collectively referred to in the Qur'ān as 'the most beautiful names', *al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*, the word for beautiful here coming from another root, that of *ḥasuna*, to be fine, good and beautiful. This description of the divine names comes in an important passage in the Qur'ān in which several such names are mentioned:

> *'He is God, other than Him there is no god, Knower of the hidden and the manifest, He is the Compassionate, the Merciful.*
> *He is God, other than Him there is no god, the King, the Holy, Peace, the Bestower of security, the Guardian, the Almighty, the All-Compelling, the Supreme; glory be to Him above all that they ascribe as partners to Him.*
> *He is God, the Creator, the Originator, the Fashioner of forms—unto*

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[2] As Alasdair MacIntyre writes: 'We are looking for a conception of *the* good which will enable us to order other goods, for a conception of *the* good which will enable us to extend our understanding of the purpose and content of the virtues, for a conception of *the* good which will enable us to understand the place of integrity and consistency in life.' *After Virtue—A Study in Moral Theory*, London, 1981, p. 204.

[3] See A J Wensinck et al, *Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane*, Leiden, 1936-1969, vol. 1, p. 373, for references to standard collections of Sunni *Hadīth* which cite this saying, such as those of Ibn Hanbal, Muslim and Ibn Māja. In the Shi'a tradition, this saying is attributed to Imam 'Alī. See 'Allāma Muṭahharī, online book, *The Islamic Modest Dress* (http://al-islam.org/modestdress/title_htm) for references to this saying in the compendium of traditions entitled *Wasā'il al-Shī'ah*. The following saying of Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq is also noted by Muṭahharī: 'God is beautiful and He loves His creatures to embellish themselves and reflect their beauty.'

> *Him belong the most beautiful Names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him. And He is the Almighty, the Wise.'* (Sūrat al-Ḥashr, LIX: 22-24)

Even though some of the divine names refer to the wrathful side of God, nonetheless, as a whole, they are given the epithet of 'beautiful', and this fact in itself is full of significance: even those qualities which, on the surface, appear to be other than beautiful—those which refer to God as 'the Avenger' (*al-Muntaqim*) or 'the Slayer' (*al-Mumīt*)—are in fact integrated within a framework defined by beauty. For all these apparently negative attributes are manifested in order to restore a lost equilibrium, and thus bring about harmony, and harmony is inseparable from beauty. It is thus that all the divine qualities are described collectively as 'beautiful': the totality of the acts of the attributes of God cannot be described as anything other than beautiful insofar as they are complementary, integrated, harmonious, and therefore 'beautiful'. Beauty is not just one amongst a range of qualities and attributes; rather, this quality takes us to something absolutely fundamental and irreducible about the divine nature.

The fact that all of the 114 chapters of the Qur'ān (except one, chapter IX) begin with the *basmala*, the consecration: 'In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful' *(bismi'Llāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm)* likewise indicates this ontological precedence of beauty over other qualities, for the names of mercy refer to the gentle and as it were 'maternal' aspect of God—the root of the word for mercy, *raḥma* is connected to the word for 'womb', *raḥim*. One might have thought it more logical to balance out the formula of consecration by referring to a name expressing the rigorous side of God alongside one of these names of mercy, but instead one finds a repetition of the principle of compassion. God is, above all else, merciful and compassionate. As the Qur'ān says: *My Mercy encompasseth all things* (VII: 156). The qualities of mercy, forgiveness and compassion all stem from the absolute goodness of God. Infinite goodness and absolute beauty, then, are inseparable within the divine nature; and they are likewise inseparable on the plane of the human soul: as Frithjof Schuon so aptly puts it, summing up the relationship between virtue and beauty in general, but which is particularly pertinent to this relationship within the Islamic view of ethics: beauty is outward virtue, virtue is inward beauty.[4]

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[4] Frithjof Schuon, *The Transfiguration of Man*, Bloomington, 1995, p. 113.

As mentioned earlier, the word for beauty in the *ḥadīth* describing the divine nature was *jamāl*, but the other word for beauty, *ḥusn*—as in the phrase *al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*, 'the most beautiful names'—takes us closer to the core of the relationship between virtue and beauty. For whereas the conventional term used for 'ethics' is *akhlāq* (plural of *khuluq*, character, nature) in Arabic, there is another term comprising the meanings of virtue, goodness, beauty, moral excellence, and that term is *iḥsān*, the literal meaning of which is 'making beautiful'.[5] The word is the verbal noun derived from the fourth form of the Arabic verb, *aḥsana,* meaning to do good, to make excellent, to adorn. In the Shi'i tradition of ethics, much emphasis is placed on the contrast between *ḥusn* (beauty) and *qubḥ* (ugliness) in the definition of virtue and vice, respectively; and what is particularly stressed in this ethical tradition is the principle that the intrinsic beauty/goodness of good acts, attitudes, dispositions can be grasped as such by the intellect and is not merely the result of some arbitrary divine *diktat:* acts are not simply defined as 'good' because the revealed Law prescribes them, nor are bad acts bad simply by virtue of being proscribed by the same Law. Rather, the Law prescribes good acts because they are intrinsically good, and the intellect is, by its nature, capable of perceiving that goodness, and it is capable of perceiving the 'beauty' of that goodness;[6] and likewise as regards bad actions, they are bad by nature, and both their evil and their 'ugliness' can be perceived by the intellect.[7]

Iḥsān is the third term in a ternary formulated by the Prophet in a well-known saying, known as the *Ḥadīth Jibrā'īl*, as the interlocutor in the dialogue is none other than the angel Gabriel in human form. He came to the Prophet and asked him a series of questions:

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[5] See Sachiko Murata and William Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, New York, 1994, pp. xxxii, 267-273. In drawing attention to the aesthetic connotation of this key term, the authors cast into a different light the many verses in the Qur'ān that mention *iḥsān* and its derivatives. For example, LIII: 31: ... [*that He may*] *recompense those who do what is beautiful with the most beautiful.*

[6] *Cf.* St Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.*, I-II, q.27 a.1: 'The beautiful is the same as the good, and they differ in aspect only. For since good is what all seek, the notion of good is that which calms the desire; while the notion of the beautiful is that which calms the desire, by being seen or known ... it is evident that beauty adds to goodness a relation to the cognitive faculty.'

[7] See Ja'far Sobhani, *Doctrines of Shi'i Islam*, trans. R Shah-Kazemi, London, 2002, pp. 48-51, for a brief explanation of the 'intelligibility of virtue and vice', by a leading contemporary Shi'i theologian. See also M A Shomali, *Shi'i Islam: Origins, Faith & Practices*, ICAS, London, 2003, pp. 136-140.

> 'O Muhammad, tell me about Submission *(al-islām)*', the stranger asked. The Prophet replied: '*Al-islām* is to testify that there is no god but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God, to perform the prayers, to pay the poor-due *(al-zakāt)*, to fast in Ramaḍān, and to make the pilgrimage to the House [the Kaʿba] if you are able to do so.' The narration continues:
> 'He [Gabriel] said: You have spoken truly, and we were amazed at him asking him and saying that he had spoken truly. He said: Then tell me about faith *(al-īmān)*. He said: It is to believe in God, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day, and to believe in divine destiny, both the good and the evil thereof. He said: You have spoken truly. He said: Then tell me about virtue *(al-iḥsān)*. He said: It is to worship God as if you could see Him, and if you see Him not, yet truly He sees you.'[8]

The discussion pertaining to the 'vision' of God is vast and complex in the Islamic tradition, and we cannot enter that discussion here. Suffice to say that the most satisfying formulation regarding the nature of this vision is given by Imam ʿAlī who, upon being asked whether he had 'seen' God, replied that he would not worship what he had not seen, and added: 'Eyes do not see Him through the witness of outward vision, but hearts see Him through the verities of faith *(ḥaqā'iq al-īmān)*.'[9]

'Seeing God' through the vision of a heart transfigured by the spiritual realities of faith constitutes the highest form of *iḥsān*, and carries in its train that mode of *iḥsān* that is expressed by the notion of 'virtue'. The *muḥsin* is therefore one who not only does good, but also sees God, rather than 'seeing himself'. The Imam warns us to beware of vanity, conceit and lavish praise of oneself by others, as these are 'Satan's most reliable opportunities to efface the virtue *(iḥsān)* of the virtuous *(al-muḥsinīn)*.'[10] The true, objective vision of God results not only in virtue but also in spiritual effacement in the *face* of that supreme Reality. The all-engrossing

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[8] This is the first part of a strongly authenticated tradition related by both Shiʿi and Sunni sources. See, for the full text in both English and Arabic, *Ḥadīth* no. 2 of *An-Nawawī's Forty Hadith*, tr. E Ibrahim, D Johnson-Davies, Damascus, 1976, pp. 28-33.

[9] See Syed Ali Reza's translation (which we have not followed) of the dialogue between the Imam and Dhiʿlib, in which this important statement occurs in the *Nahj al-balāgha*, translated as *Peak of Eloquence*, New York, 1996, p 354.

[10] *Nahj al-balāgha*, Tehran, 1993, p. 382; *Peak*, p. 546.

vision of oneself, on the contrary leads not only to the forgetting of God—the abandonment of 'theocentric' ethics—but also to all the vices that feed upon egocentricity as their life-blood.

To be virtuous, then, is to be a *muḥsin*, and this entails much more than simply an outward mode of action, or a set of observable behavioural traits: it is in reality a form of worship, governed by the awareness of God, an awareness that God always 'sees you', even if 'you see Him not'. It should be noted that this form of worship cannot be conflated with the specific acts of formal worship already described by the Prophet in his answer to the question of what *islām* consists in—the double testimony, the canonical five daily prayers, the alms tax, fasting during Ramaḍān and the pilgrimage to the Ka'ba. Rather, the 'worship' in question here, in the context of *iḥsān*, is supra-formal; it encompasses the whole of one's life, one's inner being is fashioned by the permanent awareness of the divine presence, a presence which is conscious: God truly sees you.

The state governed by the principle of *iḥsān* is thus a pre-requisite for the sincerity of outward action, whether such action assumes the form of obligatory prayer or moral praxis. It is a state of being which is determined by a *vision*, which is not in the first instance moral, but which carries in its train moral rectitude; it is a vision of ultimate reality, which elicits and generates an existential disposition: one must first *be* and then *act*, being taking priority over action in the measure that spirit takes precedence over form, and the principle, over its manifestations. This existential disposition, or mode of being, is predicated, realistically, not only upon the ultimate spiritual vision—'seeing God'—but also, on the less exacting 'vision', that which is constituted by the knowledge that, 'if you see Him not, yet truly He sees you'. This in turn implies the awareness that one is perpetually in the presence of God, in the presence of that Reality to which one is accountable, a Reality which is not only absolutely just—and which thus calls forth from us ethical propriety—but also, and above all else, beautiful in its essence—and which thus invites us to partake of contemplative felicity.

The very beauty of God—appreciated in the measure of one's contemplativity—calls forth the beauty of man: 'Assume the character traits of God '*takhallaqū bi'akhlāqi'Llāh*',[11] the Prophet is reported to

[11] This saying, though not strongly attested by the exoteric authorities, nonetheless plays an indispensable role in the elaboration of the spiritual foundation of virtue in the mystical

have said, and the divine archetype of beauty is rendered accessible to man through the sincerity of his effort at realizing *iḥsān*, the 'making beautiful/fine/excellent' of his own soul. In the Islamic universe of ethical discourse, one might say that there is no ethics without aesthetics; and aesthetics, for its part, extends far beyond the domain of artistic sensibility, while also including it, needless to say. The appreciation of beauty enters into the articulation of one's spiritual sensitivity and into one's ethical comportment. It could also be said that in the theocentric view of ethics being presented here, spiritual aesthetics functions as a bridge connecting metaphysics with ethics: the assimilation of the Real, on the plane of metaphysics, takes the form of a vision of the Beautiful, and this in turn bears fruit as ethical predisposition, that moral goodness which is inward beauty. Ethical action is thus predicated, ultimately, on contemplation; initially, it is based on an intuition of the divine substance of goodness and beauty, an intuition which is profoundly deepened through the practice of prayer, and ultimately brought to fruition by spiritual contemplation.[12] Thus we find Imam ᶜAlī insisting that all of our actions are the fruit of our prayers: 'Know that your every action is dependent upon your prayer'.[13]

Turning now to the level of moral praxis, let us note that the metaphysical qualities of Being—or, in theological terms, the 'names and qualities' of God—are discernible not only in their archetypal or principial nature, but also through their traces or reflections in the souls of exemplary human beings—primarily, the prophets and the saints. In Islamic terms, the final prophet, Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd Allāh, is regarded as the most complete embodiment of the virtues, which, for their part, are rooted in the divine qualities which they reflect. This perspective on the relationship between human and divine qualities is summed up by Ibn

traditions of Islam. It goes hand in hand with the esoteric interpretation of another saying—which is well-attested: 'God made Adam in His form (*ṣūratihi*).' In general, the theologians understand the form in question to be that of Adam—thus, 'God made Adam in Adam's form'—whereas the mystics understand the form to be that of God.

[12] For the difference between formal prayer and essential contemplation—both being understood as modes of 'remembrance of God'—see the essays in the section on prayer and spirituality in *Catholics and Shi'a in Dialogue—Studies in Theology and Spirituality*, eds. Anthony O'Mahony, Wulstan Peterburs and Mohammad Ali Shomali, London, 2004, pp. 185-320.

[13] *Nahj al-balāgha* p. 330; see also the English translation of Syed Ali Reza (which we have not followed) in *Peak of Eloquence*, p. 487.

'Arabī, possibly the most influential theosopher/gnostic in the Islamic mystical tradition,[14] in his description of the wisdom behind the creation of Adam. This description comes at the beginning of his chapter entitled 'The Ringstone of the Wisdom of Divinity in the Word of Adam' in his most famous work, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* ('The Ringstones of Wisdom'):

> The Real willed, glorified be He, in virtue of His Beautiful Names, which are innumerable, to see their identities *(aʿyān)*—if you so wish you can say: to see His Identity *(ʿayn)*—in a comprehensive being that comprises the whole affair insofar as it is possessed of existence,[15] and His Mystery is manifest to Himself through it. For the vision a thing has of itself in itself is not like the vision a thing has of itself in another thing, which will be like a mirror for it ...[16]

In this perspective, the whole of creation is akin to a mirror, while Adam is the principle of reflection for that mirror. It is thus the human being, alone, who reflects all of the qualities back to God; by this means, God comes to enjoy the vision of all of His own qualities 'in another': those perfect exemplars of humanity who faithfully reflect the source of their creation. The qualities are divine, whether they be grasped in their supra-manifest mode within the divine nature, or in their manifested mode within human beings. But the difference in existential modality is never overlooked by this vision of essential identity. The difference is analogous to that between light and its reflection in a mirror: the reflection is light,

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[14] Ibn 'Arabī's influence is equally strong in the Sunni and Shi'i traditions, even if not all of his positions conform to those upheld within the exoteric dimensions of the two traditions. For the most comprehensive presentation of Ibn 'Arabī's vast corpus, see the two volumes by William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, Albany, 1989, and *The Self-Disclosure of God*, Albany, 1998.

[15] One might also translate this as 'qualified by existence' *(muttaṣifan bi'l-wujūd)*. The meaning here is that God created a 'being' (*kawn*, which also means cosmos, and more literally, 'that which has come to be') capable of comprising, through reflection and in manifest mode, the 'whole affair', that is, the supra-manifest reality of the divine essence, doing so insofar as it, the *kawn*, is 'qualified' by existence, that is, it has bestowed upon it a relative and derivative existence, that existence which, strictly speaking, pertains solely to the divine Essence—whence the epithet for this school of thought, *waḥdat al-wujūd*, the oneness of existence or being.

[16] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, trans. Caner Dagli, *The Ringstones of Wisdom*, Chicago, 2004, p. 3.

and nothing other than light as regards its essential substance, its reality, but it is also other than light as regards its limitations, its derivative nature, and its ontological contingency or 'poverty'—its utter dependence on a source external to itself.

As mentioned above, it is in the soul of the Prophet that the divine qualities are most perfectly embodied as virtues. The conduct of the Prophet (his *sunna*) is a fundamental moral and spiritual paradigm for the believers. The Muslims are told by God in the Qur'ān (XXXIII: 21) that they have in the Prophet a 'beautiful example' *(uswa ḥasana)*, and the Prophet is indeed imitated both as regards outward acts and inward attitudes. But one should not view the prophetic paradigm only in terms of the last prophet; for the reality of the prophetic substance is by no means exhausted by its manifestation as the particular man through whom the final revelation was conveyed. Rather, this prophetic reality, substance, or 'light' is to be understood in terms of the following statement by the Prophet: 'I was a prophet when Adam was still between water and clay.'[17] This statement recalls that of Christ: 'Before Abraham was, I am' (John VIII: 58). The prophetic reality *(al-ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadiyya)* or the prophetic light *(al-nūr al-muḥammadī)* not only transcends all particular prophets, it also comprises them; it is thus that, in the Qur'ān, the essence of the prophetic message is deemed to be one: *And We sent no messenger before thee, but that We revealed unto him: There is no god but Me, so worship Me* (XXI: 25). Likewise, one can understand better why it is that belief in all the prophets is incumbent upon the Muslims, and that, even more profoundly, the true believers are described as those who do not make any distinction between God's messengers. This is expressed in the following verse, which comes closest of all to defining the Islamic credo:

> *The messenger believeth in that which hath been revealed unto him from his Lord, and [so do] the believers. Every one believeth in God*

[17] This saying is found in Shi'i sources, such as Amīnī's, *al-Ghadīr* (vol.7, p. 38), and al-'Āmilī's *Miftāḥ al-falāḥ* (p. 29); and in such Sunni sources al-Ḥākim's *al-Mustadrak* (vol. 2, p. 609; with a slight variation: here Adam is described as being 'between spirit and body'); al-Suyūṭī's *al-Jāmī al-ṣaghīr* (vol. 2 , p. 296, in the same form as the latter reference). These references are from the CDRom *al-Muʿjam al-fiqhī*, Nashr-i Markaz, Tehran, 2003.

> *and His angels and His scriptures and His messengers—we make no distinction between any of His messengers* ... (II: 285)[18]

In this light it is easier to understand why the Qur'ān is replete with stories and lessons from the lives of many of the pre-Muḥammadan prophets—of whom there are, according to tradition, 124,000; *'about some We have told thee, and about others We have not told thee'* (XL: 78). These prophets are fully integrated within the Muslim spiritual universe—albeit in ways which may not fully correspond to the accounts given in the New and the Old Testaments. The different prophets, as depicted in the Qur'ān, can be seen as so many facets of one and the same jewel, or crystal, the dazzling array of refractions of the one light passing through it being elicited by the different environments in which the essential prophetic message is conveyed. The way in which the one message assumes such diverse forms is beautifully expressed in the following Qur'ānic image:

> *And in the earth are neighbouring tracts, and gardens of vines, and fields sown, and palms in pairs, and palms single,* **watered with one water**. *And we have made some of them to excel others in fruit. Surely herein are signs for a people who understand.* (XIII: 4; emphasis added)

All of the prophets are also seen as belonging to a single *umma*, a single religious community. In the chapter aptly entitled 'The Prophets' *(al-anbiyā')*, mention is made of Moses, Aaron, Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, David, Solomon, Job, Ishmael, Enoch (Idrīs), Ezekiel, Jonah, Zacharias, John, Jesus and finally, Mary, the last person to be spoken of prior to the verse which declares: *Indeed, this, your umma is one umma, and I am your Lord, so worship Me* (XXI: 92).

The stories of the prophets are thus stories of, and for, the single, all-embracing, universal religious community. A Muslim typically reads the stories of the different prophets as pertaining not only to sacred history, but also to the doctrinal teachings of Islam, to the moral challenges one faces in one's own life, and, inwardly, to the spiritual vicissitudes of one's own soul. To give just one example of the latter principle, Rumi, in the

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[18] See our *The Other in the Light of the One—The Universality of the Qur'an and Interfaith Dialogue*, Islamic Texts Society, Cambridge, 2006, for a discussion of this important theme, based on traditional spiritual exegesis of the Qur'ān.

middle of one of his stories concerning Moses and Pharaoh, suddenly breaks off the narrative and speaks directly to his readers:

> 'The mention of Moses has become a chain to the thoughts (of my readers), for (they think) that these are stories which happened long ago.
> The mention of Moses serves for a mask, but the light of Moses is thy actual concern, O good man.
> Moses and Pharaoh are in thy being: thou must seek these two adversaries in thyself.
> The (process) of generation from Moses is (continuing) till the Resurrection: the Light is not different (though) the lamp has become different. '[19]

Thus all of the prophets and their stories concern the Muslim at different levels, offering the spiritually sensitive seeker so many exemplary ways in which to deal with concrete problems, the prophetic response embodying the appropriate combination of moral and spiritual qualities. The situations described in the Qur'ān cover an astonishing range of complex ethical challenges together with solutions in which spiritual principles are brought to the fore. One such challenge—a particularly relevant one for our times—is that with which the prophet Joseph was confronted. A brief look at his way of overcoming temptation, according to the Qur'ānic account, will help to illustrate the relationship between moral rectitude and spiritual vision which is being stressed in this paper.

The story of Joseph in the Qur'ān is contained within chapter 12, entitled 'Yūsuf', and which, unlike other chapters,[20] is almost exclusively devoted to the story in question. It is similar, in its broad outlines, to the story as recounted in the Bible, but there are many significant differences. The part of the story which concerns us here is Joseph's success in resisting the attempted seduction of Zulaykha the beautiful wife of his master in Egypt. This takes us to the heart of one of the most sensitive moral problems of our times: how to resist temptations to seek sensual gratification outside the bonds of marriage. For, despite being a prophet, and thus *maʿṣum*, or morally impeccable, Joseph nonetheless felt, at some level of consciousness,

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[19] *Mathnawī*, tr. R A Nicholson, London, 1934, III, 1251-1255. (The words in parentheses are by Nicholson.)

[20] Each of the other chapters of the Qur'ān which bears the name of a prophet as its title in fact devotes only a limited portion of the chapter to the prophet in question.

the pressure exerted by Zulaykha's attempted seduction. This is clear on both occasions[21] when Zulaykha tried to seduce him. On the first, Zulaykha had bolted the door and urged Joseph to come to her; his reply was: *I seek refuge in God*, and the Qur'ān adds, pointedly: *She verily desired him, and he would have desired her,* **had he not seen the evidence of his Lord** (XII: 23-24; emphasis added).[22] On the second occasion when Zulaykha made her advances (this time, together with her invited guests), and when imprisonment was threatened should Joseph refuse, he cries out: *O my Lord, prison is dearer to me that that unto which they are inviting me; and if Thou fend not off their plot, I shall incline unto them and become one of the ignorant* (XII: 33).

Thus, Joseph was indeed attracted to his beautiful seductress, but ascribes his successful resistance not to his own power but to God. For, after he is released from prison, and exonerated of all guilt, he says: *I do not exonerate myself, for the soul incites to evil, unless my Lord hath mercy* (XII: 53).[23] What should be stressed here, to begin with, is not just the juxtaposition between human sinfulness and divine mercy; for a unilateral stress on this contrast would diminish human moral responsibility, it would imply that human agency is entirely passive, utterly dependent upon divine intervention. Rather, man's moral agency is active, and is rigorously centred on intellectual discernment and spiritual vision. For Joseph 'saw' concretely the 'evidence' of his Lord: we return to the very essence of *iḥsān*, a vision of God, which translates into unshakeable virtue. In this instance, it generates the power to abstain from evil, to remain incorruptible, and this power cannot be dissociated from the beauty of the vision enjoyed. For what is 'seen' by Joseph is not just some abstract moral

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[21] In the Bible account, Zulaykha makes only one advance.

[22] One should also note that Joseph says: my lord hath made excellent (*ahsana*) my abode. Most commentators say that the lord in question is his master, the husband of Zulaykha, but a more mystical reading would have the lord refer to God, so that the meaning becomes: God has made excellent (or beautiful) my spiritual station. This reading fits well with the principles being discussed here.

[23] Joseph expresses here one of the key themes in what would be later elaborated within the discipline of mystical psychology. The 'soul which incites to evil' *(al-nafs al-ammāra bi'l-sū')* is that lower dimension of the soul which needs to be overcome. First it is tamed through discipline (when the soul is characterised by self-censure: *al-nafs al-lawwāma)*, and then it is eliminated altogether through grace, when the soul is characterised by the 'peace of certainty' (*al-nafs al-muṭma'inna*). See Muhammad Ajmal, 'Sufi Science of the Soul', in *Islamic Spirituality*, ed. S H Nasr, London, 1987, vol. I, pp. 294-307.

'evidence'—the comprehension that extra-marital relations were sinful, and would be punished by a just Lord who knows and sees everything; rather, what is seen is the 'evidence' provided by the very presence of that which he witnesses. The reality and power of God is fully present for the prophet, but so is the self-evident—albeit supra-sensible—beauty of God, and it is this transcendent beauty which eclipses the ensnaring, but illusory, beauty of the seductress. In the face of absolute beauty, all of its reflections on lower planes fade into insignificance—even if all beauty, on whatever plane of manifestation or reflection, is nothing but the beauty of God. For the substance of beauty is one, absolute and infinite, while its forms, only, are many, relative and finite.

In the light of this beauty, resistance to temptation emerges not so much as a consequence of negative constraint, rather, it arises out of a supremely positive attraction: the irresistible attraction exerted by the transcendent source of all beauty upon the soul of one whose spiritual 'eye' enjoys the vision of God. It is not that such a person has to strenuously withhold himself from the world; for the world, and all its false allure, is withdrawn from one who is penetrated by this vision of beauty. It is possible to assert, therefore, that beauty, far from being merely that which is aesthetically pleasing, is ethically empowering; and this, in the very measure that the beauty in question is retraced to its divine source. One might go so far as to say that love of God is inconceivable in the absence of the beauty of God, it is this beauty and not just the divine qualities of goodness, mercy, justice, etc., which make God infinitely lovable. It is this love of God, stemming from a concrete vision of divine beauty, which buttresses and deepens all moral values, imbuing them with an existential certitude which moral conviction, on its own, will not possess. This certitude is existential and not just conceptual in that love of divine beauty resounds with the deepest nature of the soul, which, as seen already, is made in the 'form' of God, a form which the Qur'ān refers to as most beautiful: God *formed you, and made beautiful your forms (aḥsana ṣuwarakum).* (XL: 64)

A 'theocentric ethics' governed by this vision of the intrinsic beauty of divine reality makes good action not only conceivable and practicable but also infinitely attractive, if not irresistible. To accomplish sin, in such a perspective, becomes practically inconceivable, in much the same way as ugliness is intrinsically repulsive. One should also note, finally, that a moral disposition that is centred on God rather than man, far from rendering inaccessible the source of human morality, makes that

source inescapable. For man is made in the image or form of God, and he cannot escape That of which he is an image, and which is thus more fully constitutive of 'his' reality than he is himself, just as, to return to our earlier image, the reflection is more fully real in and as the Light of which it is a reflection than it is as a reflection. Thus, God describes Himself as being *closer to him [man] than his jugular vein* (L: 16); and the divine reality *cometh between [a man] and his own heart* (VIII: 24). The beauty of the divine presence, therefore, is not only transcendent, it is also immanent and all-pervasive. We can therefore adapt the formula of the first *shahāda* of Islam and say: 'There is no beauty except [that of] God *(lā jamīla illā'Llāh)*'. This testimony appears to us as an appropriate response to the universal, and indeed unavoidable, beauty of God. For if it be true that He 'sees' us—*He is with you wherever ye be* (LVII: 4)—it is also true that we cannot help 'seeing' Him and the beauty of the countenance divine: *Wherever ye turn, there is the Face of God.* (II: 115)

THE MORAL SYSTEM OF ISLAM

Gholamreza Raeseian

In this paper I will try to study briefly the moral system of Islam and then have a glance at some moral principles which are found in the Qur'an and Shi'a tradition. When we talk about a moral system there should be some supreme goal/s that human beings try to achieve and against which we can evaluate their actions and characters. The Islamic moral system is based on the following facts:

1. Man is composite of soul and body. We believe that the reality of man is soul, because all his knowledge, tendencies and intentions are related to the soul which remains after death for ever. The Qur'an refers to this reality in the following verses: 32: 9, 15: 29, 38: 72, 23: 115. On the reality of death, the Qur'an says: 'God takes the soul of men when they die' (Chapter 39). This shows that the soul of men will be alive for ever and the body will be destroyed.

Reflecting on the Qur'an, one may conclude that the soul of men is an eternal and divine element and that at the time of death God or His angel/s take/s the soul and it leaves the body. The soul remains forever, so it should be trained and purified.

It should be noted that the soul in this world needs the body to perform its actions and activities and that the body is the vessel of the soul toward the supreme goal, so we should regard it as a vessel not more.

2. The soul can be perfected and developed. This means that the soul can achieve more knowledge and obtain more human perfection. The moral perfection of a human being is the very supreme perfection of soul.

3. The soul has free-will and informed choice. This is an important characteristic of the soul by which it can choose the supreme goal and perform the suitable activity to achieve it. Moral perfection depends on free-will and knowledge has effects upon the choice.

4. Mankind loves himself, that is, an essential characteristic of mankind is self-love. Human will is based on two things: knowledge and self-love.
5. Man inclines towards infinite perfection. It should be noted that people may make mistakes in discovering what human perfection is. Here we can understand the importance of the divine revelation in introducing perfection.

According to Islam, the supreme goal and ultimate end is closeness and nearness to God. The idea of nearness to God has been mentioned in some verses, such as: 89: 27-30; 54: 54 and 55. Nearness to God has been sought by the infallible Imams, e.g:

> My God, so make us travel on the roads that arrive at thee and set us in to motion on the paths nearest to reaching thee!
> ... To thee is the gladness of my eye, joining thee the wish of my soul. Toward thee is my yearning in love for thee my passionate longing ... thy neighbourhood my request, nearness to thee the utmost object of my asking ... [The Whispered Prayer of the Devotees 76].

> My God, place us with him whom thou hast chosen for thy nearness ... granted gazing upon thy face shown the favour of thy good pleasure given refuge from separation from thee and thy loathing, settled in a sure sitting place in thy neighbourhood, whom thou hast picked for contemplating thee. [The Whispered Prayer of the Lovers 77]

> Cool my burning thirst but reaching thee. Quench my ardour but meeting thee. Damp my yearning but gazing upon thy face. Settle my settling place without closeness to thee ... eliminate my grief but thy nearness; [The Whispered Prayer of the Utterly Poor 79]

To come near to God people should be purified. For this purpose God has sent His prophets with instructions to people for the purity of their soul. There are some verses in the Qur'an on this matter. For example, the Qur'an says:

> He is the one who has sent amongst illiterate people an apostle from among themselves who recites to them His

> verses and purifies them and teaches them the Book and the wisdom. (62: 2)

In another chapter God puts emphasis on the purification and purity of the human soul by swearing eleven times as follows:

> I swear by the sun and its brilliance and the moon when it follows the sun and the day when it makes manifest the sun (and her beauty) and the night when it covers the sun and the heaven and Him who made it and the earth and Him who extended it and the soul and Him who made it perfect, then He inspired it to understand what is right and wrong for it. He will indeed be successful who purifies it and he will indeed fail whoever pollutes and corrupts it. (91: 1-10)

Thus, there seems to be no doubt about the necessity of the purification and refinement of the soul, but it should be noted that the purification of the soul is a prerequisite to approximation to God. The exclusive way to get nearer to God is purification of the soul and the exclusive way to purify it is worship. So all moral principles and obligations help us purify the soul. The Qur'an says:

> And that you should worship Me alone, this is the right path. (36: 61)

In another verse, the Qur'an introduces the worship as an aim and goal of the creation of jinn and men. (51: 56) 'And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should worship Me'.

The role of intention

We name action as worship when it has two characteristics: the first one is that it must be in itself good and the second is that it must be performed for the sake of God. So intention is very important and essential.

The role of the faith

It is obvious that the intention of getting nearer to God is not possible without believing in God. Therefore, the origin for any value in the Islamic moral order is faith (or belief in God). According to the Qur'an, faith helps people in observing moral principles:

> Certainly you have in the Apostle of God an excellent example for him who hopes in God and the Last Day and remembers God much. (33: 21)

Now let us categorize the moral teachings of the Qur'an:

I principles and commands that govern one's relationship with God
II those that govern one's relationships with oneself
III those that govern one's relationship with one's family (household)
IV those that govern one's relationships with other people

The first group

There are many principles and commands in this category, but I will mention only some of them.

Remembrance of God: In many verses the Holy Qur'an commands the believers to remember God. For example, the Qur'an says:

> Remember Me, I will remember you and be thankful to Me, and do not be ungrateful to Me. (2: 152)
> Remember your lord much and glorify Him in the evening and the morning. (3: 41)
> Remember your lord within yourself humbly and fearing and in a voice not loud in the morning and the evening, and be not of the heedless ones. (7: 205)
> O you who believe remember God, remembering frequently. (33: 41)
> And remember the name of your lord and devote yourself to Him with exclusive devotion. (73: 8)

The remembrance of God has many advantages and benefits such as serenity and tranquillity of the heart. In chapter 13 verse 28 God says:

> Those who believe and whose hearts find serenity by the remembrance of God; now surely by God's remembrance hearts find serenity and tranquillity.

The other benefit of remembrance of God is the luminosity of hearts. In this regard Imam ʿAli, the first Imam of the Shiʿa, says:

> Certainly God, the glorified, has made His remembrance the luminosity and shine of the hearts. (*Nahj al-Balaghah*, Sermon 219)

The third benefit is that remembrance of God is the medicine and cure of diseases of the heart.

Loyalty: God in various verses of the Qur'an commands us to worship Him sincerely and faithfully:

> Surely We have revealed to you the Book with the truth, therefore worship God being sincere to Him in obedience. (39: 2)
> Say: I am commanded that I should worship God being sincere to Him in obedience. (*Ibid.* 11)
> And they were not enjoined anything except that they should worship God being sincere to Him in obedience. (98: 5)

Addressing Abraham, God says:

> Say: surely my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for God, the lord of the worlds.

Repentance: In various verses God asks the believers to repent towards Him and ask His forgiveness:

> O you who believe! Repent towards God a sincere repentance. (66: 8)
> Repent to God all of you, O believers! So that you may be successful. (24: 31)

> And ask forgiveness of your lord, then repent towards Him surely my lord is Merciful, loving-kind. (11: 90)

Trust in God: There are many verses in which God commands the believers to trust Him:

> And on God should you rely and trust if you are believers. (5: 23)

The second group

Again there are many principles and commands in this category, but I mention only some of them.

Purification of the soul: In chapter 91 (the Sun) God says:

> I swear by ... the soul and Him who made it perfect, then He inspired it to understand what is right and wrong for it. He will indeed be successful who purifies it.

Self-control:

> And as for him who fears to stand in the presence of his lord and forbids his own soul from its whims and caprices then surely the Garden (Paradise) that is the abode. (79: 41 and 42)
> O David! ... do not follow the whims and caprices of your own soul for they will lead you astray from God's path. (38: 26)
> O you who believe ... Do not follow your low desires (the whim of your soul). (4: 135)

In *Nahj al-Balaghah* Imam ʿAli is quoted as saying:

> In the past I had a brother-in-faith, and he was prestigious in my view because the world was humble in his eyes ... if two things confronted him he would see which was more akin to his whims and he would oppose it.

Truthfulness: There is an emphasis on truthfulness in the Holy Qur'an and traditions. I cite some of them:

O you who believe! Fear the wrath of God, and say only that which is true. (33: 70)
O you who believe! Fear the wrath of God and be with those who speak the truth. (9: 119)

The Holy Prophet asked Imam ʿAli:

'O ʿAli, those who keep these four characters enjoy perfect Islam. These characters are telling only truth, showing gratitude, prudence and good mannerism. O ʿAli! ... Honesty whitens the face and the honesty will be recorded by God as truthful. You should know that the honesty is blessed.'

After appointing Maʿadh b. Jabal as the governor of Yemen, the Holy Prophet told him:

I command you to fear God and tell the truth.

Humbleness:

And the servants of the Beneficent God are they who go (walk) on the earth with humility and when the ignorant address them they reply peaceably and with great courtesy. (25: 63)
And don't treat people with arrogance, nor go about in the land exulting over much, surely God does not love any self-conceited boaster. (31: 18)

Being moderate and balanced:

They are the ones who, when spending of their sustenance for the sake of God, are neither extravagant nor miserly: as with everything else they practise moderation and strike a correct balance between the extremes. (25: 97)
And do not utter your prayer with a very raised voice nor be silent with regard to it, and seek a way between these. (17: 110)
And the heaven, He raised it high, and He made the balance, that you may not be inordinate in respect of the measure, and keep up the balance with equity and do not make the measure deficient. (55: 7-9)

Patience:

> O you who believe! Seek assistance through patience and prayer, surely God is with the patient. (2: 152)
> O you who believe! Be patient and excel in patience and remain steadfast, and be careful of (your duty to) God, that you may be successful. (3: 200)
> And be patient and your patience is not but by (the assistance of) God. (16: 127)

Suppression of anger:

> It (Paradise) has been prepared for those who suppress their anger. (3: 137)

Avoidance of suspicion:

> O, you who believe! Avoid most of suspicion, for surely suspicion in some cases is a sin. (49: 12)

Imam 'Ali said:

> Do not regard an expression uttered by any person as evil if you can find it capable of bearing some good.

Protection of tongue:

The Prophet said:

> The salvation of the believer is in the protection of his tongue

The Prophet also said:

> The belief of a person cannot be firm unless his heart is firm, and his heart cannot be firm unless his tongue is firm.

Luqman said to his son:

> O my son! If you think that the speech is silver, surely the silence is gold.

Uttering slander:

> Woe to every slanderer, defamer! (104: 1)

Imam ʿAli said:

> The worst defect is to regard that thing (in other) defect which is present in you.

He also said:

> He who sees his own shortcomings (defects) keeps away from looking into other's shortcomings.

Freedom from envy:

> Or do they envy the people for what God has given them of His grace? (4: 54)
> Say: I seek refuge in (with) the lord of the dawn from the evil of the envious when he envies. (113: 5)

The Prophet said:

> Surely envy destroys the faith as fire destroys the firewood.

Imam ʿAli said:

> Health of body comes from paucity of envy.

Group Three

Islam has high regard for family life. There are many verses and traditions about the significance of family life and the way relationships between members of the family should be regulated. About the aim of marriage, the Qur'an says:

> Another of God's signs is that He created mates for you from among your own kind so that your mind and body might find peace and tranquillity with them. He established love and

> mercy between you so that you might coexist in peace and harmony ... (30: 22)

On necessity of religious training of the members of the family, the Qur'an says:

> O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from the fire of Hell. (66: 6)
> O Prophet! Tell your wives and daughters and all believing women to dress modestly when leaving their homes. Their dress serves to identify them as women of modest mien for whom intimate contact with strangers is strictly forbidden thus helping to prevent harassment and intimidation. (33: 59)

The Qur'an also urges members of the family to have love and mercy for each other. For example, we read:

> And treat them (women) kindly. (4: 19)
> And your lord has commanded that you shall not worship none but Him and has commanded you to treat your parents with good will and respect. If one or both of them should live to old age, do not reproach them in the slightest or send them away in anger. (17: 23 and 24)

> And He has enjoined on me to be dutiful to my mother. (19: 31)

The Qur'an goes even further and addresses some disciplines that must be observed at home. For example, it says that there are three occasions on which children should not enter their parents' bedroom without their permission:

> O you who believe! there are three occasions on which your slaves, your maids, and those of your children who have not yet reached puberty must ask your permission before entering your room: before the morning prayer, when you are still in your night clothes: in the middle of the day when you undress because of the heat and after the late evening prayer when you are preparing to sleep. At these times it is wrong for them to enter your room without your permission. (24: 58)

Group Four

There are many rules and principles that govern relationships with others. Some of them are as follows.

Fulfilling one's promise:

> And fulfil the promise surely (every) promise shall be questioned about. (17: 34)
> And those who are faithful to their trusts and their covenant. (70: 32)

Delivery of the trust:

> Surely God commands you to make over trusts to their owners. (4: 58)
> If one of you trusts another then he who is trusted should deliver his trust. (2: 283)

Pardon:

> And those who restrain (their) anger and pardon people. (3: 135)
> They should pardon and turn away. Do you not love that God should forgive you? And God is Forgiving Merciful. (24: 22)

The Holy Prophet said:

> May I lead you to the best moralities of this world and the life to come? These moralities are to regard him who disregard you, give him who deprived you (of his bestowals) and pardon him who wronged you.

Imam ʿAli said:

> When you gain power over your adversary pardon him by way of thanks for being able to overpower him.

Serving people: In Islam it is very important to render a service to fellow human beings. For example, the Qur'an reports that Jesus Christ said:

And He has made me blessed wherever I may be. (19: 31)

Commenting on this verse, Imam Sadiq, the sixth Imam of the Shi'a, said:

'This means that God has made me very useful (for the people).'

Holy Prophet said:

'To believe in God and to benefit His servants are the two highest characters.'
'God loves most the servants who benefit others.'
'There are some servants (of God) to whom people resort in needs. They will be safe from the agony of God on the Day of Resurrection.'

CHALLENGES AND DILEMMAS IN MAKING VALUES AND IDEALS: AUTHORITIES IN THE MAKING OF HUMAN VALUES

Abbas Ali Shameli

Introduction

Several questions and dilemmas emerge when we discuss values education. What do we mean by the term 'values'? Are values private or public? Are they built subjectively or do they exist objectively? Furthermore, do we recognize values as absolute concepts or do they change relative to various circumstances, cultures, ages, nations or other variables? The widely divergent answers to these questions reflect the fundamental philosophies, schools of thought and worldviews of the men and women who author them. Western societies, influenced mainly by individualism and positivism, often side with subjectivity and relativism, Halstead argues (Halstead 1996, pp. 4-6). It is, nonetheless, vital to note that the Western approach is not a single coherent school of thought. Numerous approaches have emerged in the West to deal with values education. It is difficult even to find an inclusive list of these approaches. The liberal democratic model (Halstead 1996), Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development (Morris 1994), character education (Lickona 1993a), the post-modern approach (Tappan and Brown 1996), and religious moral education (Moran 1989) are only a few examples of theories in values education. Superka and his colleagues in an older study have provided another list of other approaches in values education. Their typology includes inculcation, analysis, clarification and action learning as the current approaches in values education (Superka *et al.*, 1975). Even a brief discussion of these varying approaches requires an independent study, and clearly falls beyond the present one. I only enumerated these approaches to show the difficulty of entering the domain of values education as an avenue for self-development.

Societies with idealistic or realistic, secular or religious approaches follow other perspectives. Answers then are not formulated

in an either/or dichotomy. They depend on our philosophy of life and the way we view the world of human beings and their relations to the whole universe.

Despite the explicit disagreement of scholars over the definition of the term 'values' I prefer to quote Halstead. His definition, I suppose, is closer to what Ayatollah Sadr has envisaged in his values discussion. Halstead states: 'Values refer to principles, fundamental convictions, ideals, standards or life stances which act as general guides to behaviour or as points of reference in decision-making or the evaluation of beliefs or actions and which are closely connected to personal integrity and personal identity' (Halstead 1996, 5). Sadr also refers to values[1] as directing ideals which derive from our world views and influence our life's goals through their impact on our thinking and decision-making discourses (Sadr 1979, 146). Values in this view are regarded as the criteria of our entity both in the present and the future. This is, as Desaulniers states, because values are ontological in their nature. They refer to 'what one will be, instead of merely what one will have' (Morris 1994, p. xix, quoting from Desaulniers 1982).

Regardless of differences in the domain of values, societies more or less follow a common pattern of values and standards of behaviour. Values education can be described, in my understanding, as a way to help individuals explore common standards and internalize them. Secularity and religiosity play an important role in determining common values. The former prepares individuals for proper citizenship and active participation (Halstead 1996, pp. 8-9), while the latter advocates religious standards and ideals to facilitate self-construction. The result will influence human life both in this life and in that of the hereafter (Misbah Yazdi 1997, vol. 1, pp. 100-2). Sadr takes a religious approach in his discussion of values. He attempts to discover a Qur'anic set of common values as a necessary requirement for self-development. He consults various Qur'anic verses to elaborate on the typology and formation of a human value system.

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[1] Although Sadr prefers to use the term ideals *(al-muthul)* instead of values *(al-qiyam)*, his explanation and the characteristics he attributes to ideals approach (see above) Halstead's definition of values. Therefore in my opinion the discussion of ideals in Sadr's theory is identical with the discussion of values. This understanding is supported by Sadr's intermingling of ideals to values in his discussion of typology of ideals. (See Sadr 1979, p. 166.)

Ayatollah Sadr emphasizes that values education and individual self-development will lead to social change if they encompass the majority of the population in a given society. Their impact on only a few people is insufficient as a means of creating social change (Sadr 1979, pp. 141-42).

Values education then should play the central role in educating people overall. Education, of course, has a wider meaning than schooling. Various social elements must participate in values education. To bring about any significant change, educators must begin by identifying appropriate values and changing those that have become pathologically fixed. Sadr maintains that self-development begins with values and ideals change (Sadr 1979, 145).

Values (Halstead 1996), ideals (Sadr 1979), myths (Keen and Valley-Fox 1989), or gods and goddesses (Keen 1989 and Postman 1995) are just some of the themes proposed by various thinkers in an attempt to show the inner influencing elements. Sam Keen asserts that the impact of unconscious myths in shaping our recent history is as important as the impact of conscious science. Sigmund Freud's theory of mythic struggles between Ego and Id within the individual psyche as well as racial, national, religious and political myths had tremendous impacts in creating sacred 'isms' both in the East and in the West. Witnessing these values struggles as a part of the politics of modernity, humankind has become frustrated by the fear that history may end either with a bang or with a whimper (Keen 1989, p. x). Therefore it is crucial that we take a step backwards into ourselves and try to include self-development in the process of social and economic development.

Values and ideals formation: a forgotten crucial task

Sometimes internalized myths and gods unconsciously influence our thinking and direct our behaviour. Sam Keen assigns an effective credit to living myths. He observes: 'The dominant myth that informs a person or a culture is like the 'information' contained in DNA or the program in the system disk of a computer. Myth is the software, the cultural DNA, the unconscious information, the metaprogramme that governs the way we see 'reality' and the way we behave' (Keen 1989, p. xii). This is why Sadr asserts that any self-development must begin with values and ideals; what

Keen calls myths.[2] Myths and values can be creative or destructive, healthy or pathological. People need to be educated to handle them constructively. The challenge of rematching gods and ideals with the ever-changing realities of life is another story. We invest our myths with a sacred character, giving them the same unquestioning credit we offer to the seasons of the year. This allows them to perform the same functions as gods.

If the root of inner change is values and ideals, then we must examine the ways in which these ideals are formed and how they change. Values and ideals, as Sadr points out, depend on our world views. They are, indeed, the outcome of our philosophy of life. This philosophy fashions the way that we give meaning to life, ourselves, society and the universe. The amount and the quality of psychological energy which move us towards the objectives of our lives result from our ideals and values (Sadr 1979, pp. 145-46). As well as one's world view, the pattern of 'humanology' that each person follows influences the values system and ideals.

By humanology I mean a selected pattern by which each person explains his/her humanity, included potentialities and the way of actualizing them (SAMT 1995, p. 518). Our values system influences the goals of our lives and the methods that we choose to obtain them. The Qur'an calls these ideals and values 'god/*ilah*' or 'gods/*alihah*.' People can choose various gods. The impact of gods and ideals in human life is so influential that they direct our behaviour like God. Each of us may decide to follow God, a god or gods (Sadr 1979, pp. 147). The most important task is consciously to examine both gods and values. We must choose our myths if we are going to behave autonomously.

Quoting Santayana, Keen pushes us to compose a conscious, active feedback to our myths: 'Those who do not remember history are condemned to repeat it.' Even though this statement referred originally to culture, Keen utilizes it to provoke awareness about choosing myths. Keen states: 'If we do not make the effort to become conscious of our personal myths gradually, we become dominated by what psychologists have variously called repetition compulsion, autonomous complexes, engrams routines, scripts, games' (Keen 1989, p. xiv). To go through this process, I

[2] It seems that Keen attributes an unconscious role to myths. This role distances myths from ideals and values which are usually conscious. The significant impact of myths, nonetheless, motivated me to place them in the same basket where values and ideals are found. My major concern in this discussion is to review those influencing inner elements.

propose that we should re-examine both our world view and the specific elements that have motivated us to choose certain values and myths. At this point people may build their relationship with God. Other myths and gods function limitedly. They urge us to engage in a continuous revision. I argue that even personal, consciously selected myths, as Keen proposes, are not good tools for building co-existence. We need commonalities and common values if we are to get rid of personalism and relativism.

However, when choosing gods, we choose them as metanarratives which convey sufficient credibility, complexity, and symbolic power to enable us to organize our lives around them, Postman maintains. We have all witnessed, heard or read narratives about communism, fascism and Nazism in modern life as gods and myths which have called their adherents to fight for the establishment of a heaven on earth. Several other gods have captured the hearts and minds of many other people (Postman 1995, p. 6). Interestingly, Postman introduces us as the god-making species (Postman 1995, p. 7). At this point we should note that the Qur'an warns us not to be too caught up in gods we produce ourselves (see Q. 37:95 and 7:71). Innately we look for gods and metanarratives that give meaning to our lives and guide us to a more prosperous future. This process must be accomplished through an explanatory method, but we build our gods all the same. God, the Creator, can be the true ideal in our lives but we choose to follow the created god or gods.

Although the production of gods happens inside us, it reflects the realities of concrete life which are represented to us by major thinkers. In the age of the discovery of inductive science, figures such as Descartes, Bacon, Galileo, Kepler and Newton pioneered ideas which transformed human perceptions of God from a sacred religious God to a scientist God. This narrative was then replaced by the science-god which proved more beneficial, as it gave people a measure of power and control over their lives. It was nevertheless revealed as inadequate to explain any knowledge other than that of the present. It does not provide satisfactory answers for the beginning and the end of our existence. Science gave birth to a supposedly paradise-making son known as technology (Postman 1995, pp. 8-10).

The Father science and the Son technology promised human progress if we proved to be a technological species. The problem then was that science and technology, produced to serve people, proceeded to enslave them. The result of this frustration was a psychological polytheism. One god is not and cannot be enough. We then look for multiple gods.

Democracy, cultural pluralism and multiculturalism are other solutions which attempt to resolve the problem of the present generation of Western intellectuals (Postman 1995, pp. 13–17). Yet the question remains: in a non-melting-pot society which provokes the co-existence of people with various cultures, myths and gods, what will give meaning to life and motivate people towards a promising future? The cultural and values borderlines that divide us will continue to do so unless human beings arrive at one God, the uniting absolute ideal. This is what Sadr calls *al-mathal al-a'la* (the highest ideal) in comparison with other invented ideals (1979, pp. 145–7). The following section describes his explanation about human values and ideals-making. He aims at providing two lines of pathological and normal ideal-making.

Sadr's typology of human values and ideals-making

Human beings are values- and ideals[3]-makers. They never stop making values. They cannot live without values. Sadr argues that we have to learn to deal with values qualitatively. He provides his own typology of human values-making in a tripartite model. For him, the provision of this typology of values-making helps people to know how they choose values and how they can recognize the vulnerable points. Sadr's model functions, in my view, as a pathological instrument in the process of values and ideals formation.

I believe that values are the most meaningful and the most effective ideals of our past. Values are metacognitions which are consciously constructed by us. They give meaning to our present lives and influence our goals in future. To construct ideals and values people usually take one of the three following avenues. Contextualism, pathological generalization and transcendental values-making are the three major avenues that people often follow in their values-making, Sadr hypothesizes. In his evaluation of the quality of human values and ideals Sadr attempts to go deeply to the roots of this process. He proposes the three possible ways that people follow in making values and ideals. He then emphasizes the role of prophets in educating people to make healthy and stable ideals. According to Sadr

[3] I have already mentioned that in Sadr's theory ideals are almost identical with values. In this section these two terms have been used interchangeably.

some people choose their values from the existing context of their lives. The Qur'an narrates examples of this values selection. The reaction of most people in past generations to the invitations of the prophets has been: Let us follow what our ancestors have done. Why should we abandon the practices of our ancestors? (Sadr 1979, 148-9). (See, e. g., Q. 2:170, 5:104, 10:78, 11:62, 14:10 and 43:22.)

In his analysis of this type of ideals-making Sadr concludes that people usually follow this model when they tend to be sense-centred and pragmatic. This values-making process happens through a pragmaticality. People are happy with a values system which helps them to enjoy the present situation. They are reluctant to change values which support the existing social pattern. These people are stuck with their present context and cannot get rid of it. Therefore they cannot even think of another situation. They do not see horizons beyond the present context. These values and ideals are extracted from the existing social context and are returned to it to direct their followers to the future. Therefore, they are repeated ideals. The future here is nothing more than a repetition of present and past (Sadr 1979, pp. 148-50). This repetitious process of values-making will lead to a pathological values system and entails values disease.

Roots of contextuality in values-making

An important task of prophetic education is to educate people to exchange their gods for one God. Two main parameters, psychological and political, usually intervene in this process. When the people of a society become used to ideals and values that they have lived with, they internalize those values, which then become a part of their personality. Psychologically it will be difficult, therefore, to change these established values. The difficulty intensifies if they are formed within a luxurious and pleasing environment (Sadr 1979, pp. 148-9). People realize that chosen gods and values are effective. There is no reason to change effective gods. Moreover, values which are derived from a god or gods make human life repetitious. In this case certain gods wear the dress of absoluteness. Since gods have a limited capacity to attract people, they are finite in nature. People have to create change in them and give them newness to maintain their permanent effectiveness. People must then change the form of values and follow them repeatedly. New cycles will lead people to the same starting point.

Despite the apparent newness of gods and ideals a single essence is repeated through various forms.

Another element in refuting prophetic values instruction relates to social forces and the impact of power holders, Sadr maintains. To keep the top-down pattern of social structure, the power holders create gods and ideals. They attempt to impose decisions on people or sometimes make decisions for them, both actions which shape their value system. Sometimes power holders themselves become the god and ideal of a society. The Qur'an uses Pharaoh as an example of someone who asserts godliness (see Q. 28:30) (Sadr 1979, pp. 151-52). Sadr calls this a political element which influences the social values system. Besides these two elements there are other factors. Socio-political forces are not, I believe, limited to political elements. Propaganda, mass media, written culture, social celebrations and above all the formal educational system in each society are among the other factors which influence our value system. They can be misused by power holders to foster a preferred type of values system.

Sadr observes that gods and ideals can be elevated to play the role of religion in human life. They wear the dress of sacredness, as the Qur'an calls them gods *(aliha)* (see e.g., Q. 18:15). Because of their sacredness people are reluctant to set them aside. The sacred ideals are usually taken as gods. People worship them. To Sadr, religion is nothing more than the relationship between a worshipper and the worshipped. According to the monotheistic point of view, in addition to revealed religions, some religions are man-made. These religions are elaborated from internalized gods and ideals. Since these gods and ideals are not absolute or self-generating they do not last for ever. They are, in fact, expressions of the realities in human life and cannot direct him/her towards horizons beyond. To show the difference between these two types of religions Sadr maintains that monotheistic religions are a uniting force since they direct people towards one absolute ideal. Those religions which are elaborated from the created gods are disintegrative.

To Sadr it is impossible for human beings to create a god which directs them to a horizon beyond the limitation of their understanding (Sadr 1979, pp. 155-59). People replace them with new gods to provide meaning to human life when they become meaningless. Despite this continuous ideal renewal, gods will loose their effectiveness at some point. The society will have to put them aside. It means that the society will loose its integrative ideal. When there is no such ideal each individual

concentrates on his—or herself. Instead of concern for social benefit each person works for his/her own interests (Sadr 1979, pp. 158-61).

A society with this type of ideal problem is vulnerable to one of the three following crises. Sadr indicates that society at this level is ideally diseased from within. He believes that society in this situation is not a real being. It is a shadow of society. Social disintegration is the first crisis that threatens a society with contextual values-making. If, for instance, the society faces an external threat, it will easily disintegrate and lose its integrity. The reason is that the society in this manner is not more than a combination of citizens each of them striving for his/her own interests. The disintegration of Islamic civilization at the middle of the 7th century of the Islamic era, when Muslims faced the Mongol invasion, is an experienced example. A similar disintegration happened at the beginning of the 20th century when the Ottoman empire could not guarantee the continuity of the Islamic civilization.

The second crisis could be a complete assimilation into a non-Islamic ideal when the society has lost its own identity. A third possibility is an inner attempt from those Muslim thinkers who have still a strong feeling about the effectiveness of Islam at various ages. They try to renew those ideals which seemingly proved to be ineffective. Many Muslim thinkers and Muslim reformists attempt to discover a version of Islamic ideals which could remain effective in face of tremendous social changes. Explaining the second and the third possibilities Sadr observes:

> When Muslims confronted the age of colonialism they reacted through two different ways. One avenue directed Muslim nations to assimilate themselves to a foreign (Western) ideal. Some of the Muslim rulers applied this policy in their countries. Reza Khan in Iran and Kemal Ataturk in Turkey attempted to apply the ideal and values of Europeans which had won the campaigns in many aspects. When the Islamic ideals could not attract Muslims they applied an ideal which has proved to be effective. Muslim thinkers at the beginning of the colonial age and at the end of the disintegrating age *(awakhir al-fatrah)* which was prior to the age of colonialism strove to apply the third alternative. They wanted to give a new life to Islam. They attempted to provide the Islamic ideals in a new language and to renew Islamic ideals in a way that could meet the new needs of Islamic societies. A shadowy nation interfaces one of these three alternatives (1979, p. 163).

Sadr then switches to the second type of values and ideals selection. For some people, values-making is a process which must fit in with their future needs. Such people are able to see beyond their existing circumstances, and choose ideals and values which can direct them to a better, more promising future. They can foretell future needs, and are not overwhelmed by their existing context. The problem, nonetheless, is that human cognition is limited. People cannot foresee all aspects of their future. Human beings are unable to conceive of the absolute ideal. Usually we perceive a side or a dimension of that absolute ideal. A hidden vulnerability in human cognition is the fact that people never consider a limited fact as limited. They attribute absoluteness to what they have perceived. Generalization and absolutization[4] are psychological mechanisms that people use to enlarge the limited gods and ideals. These mechanisms are nonetheless psychological. Realities will challenge them. The absolutized gods will become inadequate in practice. Since human beings are constantly moving towards a true type of perfection and these limited ideals cannot provide that answer, these ideals will become an obstacle. They will become the ideals of the first type when they have lost their functionality for the future (Sadr 1979, pp. 164-6).

Absolutization in values and ideals-making

Two kinds of invalid generalizations usually take place when people choose the second type of values or ideals, Sadr asserts. People who are concerned about their future usually form ideals which meet future needs. Since these ideals are related to the future, they are more inclusive than those ideals which are taken from existing situations. They nonetheless convey only some aspects of the values that human beings are looking for. Overwhelmed by the Church authorities' insistence on certain religious and (erroneous) scientific ideas and exhausted by an oppressive economic system which had stratified society into elite and workers, Westerners,

[4] Absolutization is my proposed translation for Sadr's explanation of a process of false generalization. As I have discussed in this section, people sometimes consider a limited ideal as absolute. A limited value or ideal may be deemed as something absolute and self-generating. Sadr argues that this psychological willingness to derive absolute ideals from a limited fact could be a type of false generalization. Absolutization and generalization, in my view, are interchangeable in this context. They represent a process in which we consider a limited fact as an absolute or general.

for instance, chose to follow the ideal of freedom and democracy. This ideal selection was partly the result of the religious Reformation which took place in the Western Church in the 16th century. Although the Reformation began as a religious movement, it had political, social and economic overtones as well (*Enc. Britannica*, vol. 19, 1970, p. 37). People who were tired of the intolerable pressures of the owners of wealth, power and authority refused to follow the authoritative patterns of social order. Sadr describes this situation as follows:

> Europeans who pioneered the age of the Renaissance and Reformation wanted to be free from all traps, including those of Church and of feudalism. They wanted to be free to do what they wished. They wanted to think with their own minds and not with the minds of others. They wanted to have their own concerns. They did not want to have stereotypes that others produced for them. (1979, p. 167)

The Renaissance and Enlightenment were especially associated with ideals and values which included a re-crediting of human individual freedom (Schaeffer 1968, p. 33). People could no longer tolerate the existing socio-political and economic context of that period. Freedom was a value that promised a better future for all citizens. Yet the problem was that they took the instrument as their goal, Sadr observes. Democracy and freedom can create an environment where people have a voice and power. This context requires a motivating ideal. When people are free they can decide about their ideals. But they are stuck with the value of freedom, if they stop at this point. Recrediting individual freedom—although it is one step towards the future after having been stuck with present and past burdens—is not the ultimate ideal. The future is more extensive even than this ideal. Sadr calls this generalization 'horizontal generalization'. By horizontal generalization, he means that people may choose freedom or other ideals to rid themselves of oppressing and unsatisfactory existing circumstances.

Freedom however cannot be the absolute ideal. Although freedom is undoubtedly a prerequisite for human development, it is not the whole story. Freedom is without any content or ultimate ideal. To develop themselves people need not only freedom, but a goal, an ideal and a safe path toward that ideal, that absolute ideal. If people cannot choose an everlasting ideal they will be self-alienated. Freedom provides

a good context, but people need a motivating goal and a meaningful content. This goal cannot be something limited. People innately look for everlasting absolute ideals.

Sadr contests that the problem in Western values selection is that people who favour it have forgotten the necessary goal and content in their free and democratic context (Sadr 1979, pp. 166-68). Islamic societies therefore avoid allowing themselves to be swept up in this and try instead to fill a free and democratic context with the revealed content and ideal.

The above-mentioned pathological generalization has happened occasionally in all nations. Sadr alludes to another type of generalization which may be traced from the beginning of human history right up to the present time. This invalid generalization that has affected people throughout history is to base ideals on humanity as whole. Sadr maintains that human social life began with the nuclear family. It has been extended to tribes, clans, groups and nations. During each period, people have sided with a particular ideal related to that specific stage. Those living at a certain period make and accept values and ideals that are from that period. Tribalism, racism, fascism and belligerent nationalism are examples of this type of values-making which have taken place in various periods of human history. These ideals were then passed on to subsequent generations (Sadr 1979, pp. 168-9).

The major problem in our values-making is the fact that we are usually narrow-sighted, Sadr believes. It is not therefore healthy for us to form values and ideals that are disintegrated from prophetic education. If we stand in a vast field or a vast desert and try to see the farthest horizons, we achieve only a limited view. This, however, does not mean that the end of our sight is the end of the real world too. But we do imagine that our perceived horizon is the end of the world. The same problem overwhelms us when we try to choose values and ideals. Values and ideals are the horizons of human life. By choosing a limited ideal, we assume that this will be an everlasting and ever-motivating ideal. Sadr argues that seemingly everlasting horizons cannot be values and ideals, but only finite horizons (Sadr 1979, pp. 168-70). Considering this limitation, Misbah Yazdi provides a supporting argument here. He observes that because of the complexity and multidimensionality of human potentialities, the deep interactions between these potentialities, and above all else (since human life in this world is an introduction to his/her permanent life in the hereafter), Muslim moral educators must insist on the necessity

of using the content of revelation as another tool in understanding and determining a values system (Misbah 1997, vol. 1, p. 105). Revelation is a complementary tool when human beings are ambiguous about the impact of their behaviour in this world on their life in the hereafter. A believer is assured that the revealed religions provide him/her with a secure life-style which will lead to the development of a whole perfect person (*insan-i kamil*). This is because the content of revelation is from God, the creator of humankind.

If a reader approaches the Qur'an from this angle he/she will find out that the Qur'an warns us that all gods which we internalize and replace with God are only empty names. These created gods are nothing but figments of our imaginations. Although both God and gods are known to us through mental forms, the former represents a real being. Created gods are nothing but mental forms. They do not convey a true meaning but rather encourage humankind to chase after a mirage. When we reach it we find it is nothing (see Q. 53: 23 and 24: 39). Other verses provide other metaphors. They warn us that submission to gods and ideals other than God is like dwelling in a spider's web. This is undoubtedly a pleasing dwelling for a spider but a dangerous one for human beings (see Q. 29: 41). The resemblance is due to the fact that gods and man-made values cannot give a reliable lasting meaning to human life.

The Qur'an considers ideals and values which are replaced by God as mirages, erroneous perceptions of reality, and as spiders' webs if people take refuge in them (see Q. 24: 39 and 29: 41). Usually these ideals develop into the first type, contextual ideals, when they are interrelated with a positive, easy-going life-style. They will become a part of real life. People get used to them and enjoy them (Sadr 1979, p. 171). At this stage people again go back to the present and past and keep the associated ideals and values.

The third type of ideals and values-making is what Sadr calls transcendental. This type is centred around a core element, Allah. Values and ideals must be unlimited and everlasting. What we create inside us is overwhelmed by the limitations which govern our existence and our cognitive narrowness. The Islamic values system is based on a world-view which relates human beings to an absolute ideal, Allah. People relate their limited being to an unlimited ideal if they choose Allah as their final ideal. Allah is not the product of our minds. He is an absolute being outside of us but related to us. He is introduced by the monotheist

religions as the source of absolute power, knowledge, justice and beauty (Sadr 1979, p. 176).

An essential conflict will be resolved if we decide to follow this absolute ideal. Although as Muslims we always create ideals in our minds, what we worship and take as the highest ideal is Allah. Allah is an independent ideal beyond our conception. Worship and self-development is towards Allah, not towards what we create in ourselves. Personal self-conception is a tool to direct us toward a real independent God. There is a difference between a humanely invented name or mental form or an image that we create as an ideal in our mind and an ideal which exists beyond us. In Islamic ideology we are encouraged to distinguish between our mental form about God and the real independent God (Sadr 1979, pp. 176–7).

The Qur'an warns us not to choose names as values and ideals (see Q. 53:23). Submission must be directed to the real God. As among ourselves, we have a name *(ism)* and a named *(musamma)*. Our mental forms ascribed to God are nothing more than names. Names and imaginations always represent an external reality. God's names and the named (god) are characterized by two different attributes. Names are limited but the named is absolute. This absolute being is our ultimate ideal (Sadr 1979, p. 177).

Conscious or unconscious inevitable journey

Human beings are willingly and unwillingly moving towards God. Q. 84: 6 reveals: 'O you humankind! Verily you are ever toiling on toward your Lord—painfully toiling,—and you shall meet Him.' Sadr comments that this verse informs us of an inevitable, exhausting progress towards God with no respite from humankind. This journey is both continuous and infinite. People, nonetheless, proceed along this road differently. Some are aware of the progress and lag behind consciously. This group undertakes their journey responsibly. Believers and worshippers of God are among this group.[5] They are moving towards the status of nearness. Believers behave in their lives as God's responsible vicegerents on earth. Muslim moral educators believe that nearness is the ultimate goal of prophetic values education. The universe, including human beings, is ontologically related

[5] Worshipping *('ibadat)* God in Islamic jurisprudence is indeed a responsible and conscious process of this path when the believers are consciously related to the absolute ideal (Sadr 1979, 181).

to God. Human beings exist because God has given them the light of existence. Nearness is the result of a conscious intuition of this link. People can obtain this divine consciousness through faith and corresponding religious actions (SAMT 1995, p. 519).

Unbelievers are negligent or pretend to be negligent. They feel no responsibility towards God, even though they are also proceeding towards Him. Sadr notes that this process is not a geographical or a physical journey towards God. It is an ontological journey. Nor is Allah, like a geographical goal, a final point at the end of that voyage. When we travel, we aim to reach a specific point. This is because we are performing a geographical journey. Allah is however with us at all points in our spiritual journey. This is because He is absolute and our journey is existential. In this journey we are extending our beings. Although He is the aim and the final ideal, He is with us at every stage of our lives (Sadr 1979, pp. 181-83).

Sadr maintains that an important difference between a person who chooses God as an ideal and the one who submits to other values and ideals is that the former choice changes our movements and behaviours both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative consequence makes our journey infinite. While our ultimate ideal is Allah, we never reach a point at which to stop. Sadr maintains that the continuous challenge between monotheistic religions and other gods and ideals is an expression of humankind's attempts at relating to an absolute ideal.

Qualitative change is identical with a feeling of responsibility if the absolute ideal is chosen consciously. Due to a bipolar construction, namely the soul and the body, human beings are all involved in an inner conflict. Our bodies direct us toward earthly desires but our souls invite us to reach for heavenly attributes, for godly attributes such as absolute knowledge, power, justice, compassion, generosity and revenge. This conflict will be only resolved when human beings feel responsible before God (Sadr 1979, pp. 184-9). Responsibility is real only when we have to bear it before someone who has the right to ask us about our behaviour. God is an ideal beyond us who has created us and has sent prophets to teach us the true way of life. We therefore feel responsible towards an independent ideal who can ask us about His gifts. The ideals and values which we create inside us do not have the same impact. Consciously or unconsciously we know that they are our products. People avoid self-invented values if they can find ways to escape them. Evidence for this distinction is to be found in the sacrifices recorded in the history of prophecy. In this history we never find a single example of

a prophet who tired of his mission or felt doubtful. Prophets never wavered in their mission. This is because the impact of an absolute external ideal directed them in their purpose (Sadr 1979, pp. 186-88).

The link between values systems and Islamic world-views

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, a values system, according to Sadr, is influenced by one's world-view. In the above section he distinguished between two ways of proceeding in an inevitable journey. For him a conscious and responsible journey is possible when we are equipped with a clear and energetic world-view. A world-view is a pattern that people use to give a specific meaning to what they perceive. Sadr makes a distinction between God and other ideals based on the feeling of responsibility. Here he verifies the link between the values system and world-view. He points out that choosing Allah as an ideal implies belief in a monotheistic ideology. This ideology is comprised of three main elements. Muslims have chosen Allah as the highest ideal if they rise from a cognitive stage to a belief in one God. The latter is the result of cooperation between mind and heart (Misbah 1997, vol. 1, pp. 171-2).

There is a difference between knowing God and having faith in Him. The latter is a choice that happens both in mind and heart. Faith in God implies faith in His attributes. Since God is chosen as the highest ideal, believers attempt to proceed towards Him. This means that they attempt to become conscious of their inevitable ontological journey towards Him. Nearness *(qurb)* to God requires a process of self-development from us which makes us resemble Him in terms of our own characteristics. Belief in God and His attributes within Islamic ideology is completely different from the world-view found in Greek philosophy. Greek philosophers view God's attributes and more precisely the world of ideas[6] as independent facts lying beyond us in the metaphysical world.[7] Islamic ideology has an educational message when it invites us to resemble God (Sadr 1979, pp. 192-3). Belief in God and our conscious efforts helps us to overcome the inner conflict inside us.

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[6] Augustine, one of the fathers of the Roman Catholic Church called Plato's notion about the world of ideas the World of God. (See Ozmon and Craver 1995, 5)

[7] See Ozmon and Craver 1995, chapter 1, 'Idealism and Education'.

Yet we need a certain psychological energy and a sense of responsibility. Belief in the hereafter is the second element of the Islamic world-view which produces this energy. If we believe in the day of resurrection, we have realized that our life-span is not limited to this world. We are creating a new life in the hereafter by behaving either correctly or badly in this world. This realization links our life in this world to the permanent life in the hereafter. Belief in the hereafter functions as a supporting and guaranteeing element. People therefore behave, as they are responsible for their behaviour. This is because they have realized that they are not entitled to behave as they wish.

Prophethood is the third functioning element which facilitates our divine education. Prophets teach us to know God (the absolute ideal), our inevitable journey and our destiny. They watch out for us and direct us so that we do not lose our way. They are teachers of humankind, but they teach us to choose correct and ever-lasting ideals and values. Prophets function as mediators between belief in God and belief in the hereafter as the final destiny (Sadr 1979, pp. 194–5). As human history reveals,[8] prophets were never entirely successful in directing their followers to the absolute ideal. There were challenges and conflicts between prophets and those who supported other misleading ideals. Prophets were often forced to act as imams as well and to lead campaigns against Shi'i oppressors. For Sadr, from the time of the Prophet Noah onwards prophets were always both prophets and imams. Imamate, in Sadr's view, stands for leading a prophetic campaign for the establishment of social justice. After the Prophet Muhammad, according to Shi'i Imami belief, this institution was looked after by the Twelve Imams.

Then there is the attribute of justice, an attribute emphasized in Shi'i ideology. Although justice is included in God's attributes, it is of particular importance in Shi'i thought since it carries a tremendous social

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[8] Periodizing human history from a Qur'anic point of view, Sadr divides it into three major periods: the Custodial period *(dawr al-hidanah)*, when Adam and Eve were in heaven under the special care of angels; the period of unity and integration *(dawr al-wahdah)*, when the early generations of human beings were living co-operatively; and the period of disintegration and conflict *(dawr al-tashatut wa al-ikhtilaf)*, when they contested on earth for obtaining more benefits. From this period which, according to Sadr, must have begun from the time of the Prophet Noah when human co-existence was jeopardized, the conflict was so harsh that humanity needed a social leader who could resolve conflicts even by leading huge campaigns. Sadr proposes an Islamic theory which explains the formation and the characteristics of each of these periods. The Imamate is accordingly a position that belongs to the third period of human history when there have been unsolved conflicts (Sadr 1979, 241 and 1982a, 151–80).

impact. Social development is in need of social justice. Belief in justice, Sadr agues, implies an important educational message. If the society is proceeding towards a just ideal, this ontological nearness necessitates the application of social justice in a Muslim society. God's attributes, including justice, must not be viewed only as a handful of metaphysical facts which are disconnected from human life (Sadr 1979, pp. 195–7).

This explanation could be what Sadr means when he speaks about the assumed relationship between values systems and world-views. In this way Sadr attempts to correlate the five principles of the Islamic (Shi'i) world-view with the selection of an absolute ideal. Misbah Yazdi maintains that the big difference between an Islamic moral values system and a non-Islamic moral system is that the former depends on its world-view in determining moral values. The belief in one God as the only creator, owner and educator, and belief in the hereafter and its impact on our present life direct us to have a distinctive religious values system (Misbah 1997, vol. 1, pp. 100–2). It may also be the reason why Muslims believe in an ideology which consists of three pillars:[9] belief in the unity of God, belief in the day of resurrection and belief in prophecy. In a Muslim society, Allah is elevated to the centre of all ideals. He is the creator, the owner, the goal and the educator of human beings.

The selection of secular ideals and values has led to striking calamities in human history, Sadr asserts. Values-making, though it is a personal choice, always affects human collective life. The emergence of Hitler and the Nazi movement and the consequent problems of modern times reflect the results of a values system derived from a god or gods. These ideals disconnected human beings from the one absolute God. A more recent example, I believe, is reflected in the experiences recorded in the former Soviet Union. Marxism and communism ruled the country for decades. The disintegration of the USSR indicates the end point of one ideology and one god. Other countries that have experienced this god are also looking for an alternative. This is the reason why prophets throughout human history have attempted to replace gods with God. I assume that Sadr believes that the centre point and nucleus in the Islamic values system is Allah. Values beneath or around that core are formed through prophetic values education. Prophets educate people to learn to relate to God, to themselves, to nature and to society. These relationships are influenced by internalized values. These values are all God-centred. Sadr maintains that

[9] The two other pillars, namely, justice and imamate, are only ascribed to by the Shi'a.

God is absolute and that values related to Him create new horizons for human life. These values direct human behaviour to resemble as much as possible God's attributes (Sadr 1979, pp. 148-9).

Concluding remarks

Inspired by certain Qur'anic verses (e.g., 8:53 and 12:11) which discuss the roots of social change, Sadr invites us to see the existing link between social- and self-development. As in the natural and physical domain, the socio-historical aspects of human life are normative, Sadr maintains. The more we know the norms, the easier and the more active will be our treatment of a particular domain. The Qur'an teaches us the norms which govern our social and individual lives in order to facilitate a conscious and active way of living.

Shahid Sadr points out that social reconstruction in each society begins with the values development of individuals. Values and ideals are inner elements which influence our consciously selected goals. Our values system will have an impact on the goals we aim at and on the amount of psychological energy which motivates us to attain those goals. According to the Qur'an, values will be more effective and more sufficient only when they derive from a world-view which links us, in heart, to our Creator. Self-alienation, pathological and repetitious ideal-making, compulsory absolutization and social disintegration are a few examples of how people fail to construct a divine world view and a reliable values system.

Sadr examines the false process of values-making which has engaged minds and hearts throughout history. He concludes that prophetic education is a way to help people to construct a functioning values system. Sadr provides a theory of inner conflict as the foundation of human values-making. This theory suggests that unless we can overcome our inner conflict, we will project it at the social level in forms of unjust oppressive social patterns. Prophetic teachings play a complementary role in helping people to solve their inner conflicts. Class tensions, national and international clashes, gender conflicts and other types of social dilemmas are expressions of an unresolved inner conflict. Prophetic education aims at the establishment of social justice and self-development simultaneously. The roots, however, extend inwards to individual purification. This is derived from the prophetic teachings which are contained in holy scripture. Despite

this theoretical values and ideals discussion, Sadr speaks of the practical failure of those who have followed the Islamic model. Among the three types of ideal-making only the transcendental type, according to Sadr, can foster social and self-development. He nonetheless maintains that there are historical examples of Muslim collapse. This aspect goes back to the choices made by Muslims and do not contradict what Sadr attempts to propose at the theoretical level. When Muslims distance themselves from the absolute ideal and its implications or they side with other ideals and gods, they become disintegrated. As Sadr puts it, at this moment they are but a shadow of a Muslim nation.

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THE PRINCIPLES, NATURE AND FORMS OF CATHOLIC DIALOGUE IN THE MODERN WORLD

Justo Lacunza Balda MAfr

The terrorist attacks on London's transport network have left a heavy toll of dead, injured and bereaved. Panic, terror and death have been purposely caused by terrorists. Once more innocent people, who go about their daily business, have been killed and dozens of families left in sorrow and grief for their lost ones. Pope Benedict XVI in presenting his condolences spoke about 'those barbaric acts against humanity'. Sir Iqbal Sacranie, chairman of the Muslim Council of Britain, spoke about 'those terrorists, those evil people who want to demoralise us as a nation and divide us'. By some kind of coincidence, and due to workers air strike in Rome, I travelled the day after the terrorists had planted the bombs in London's public transport, and that was yesterday.

It is a great pleasure to speak to you this morning at the opening of the *Second Catholic-Shi'a Conference*. I feel very honoured to address this international meeting, organised under the auspices of Heythrop College and Ampleforth Abbey. In this Conference Catholics and Shi'a Muslims will have the opportunity to make progress in the perception, knowledge and understanding of each other's faith and tradition.

In any form of interreligious and intercultural dialogue between Christians and Muslims, there is a basic need of examining the fundamental tenets and major aspects of each other's faith identity. This might seem to some a futile exercise that could only highlight the differences and identify the problems. Nevertheless, it is vital and necessary that Muslims and Christians know the essential constitutive elements of their respective faiths, on which to build religious dialogue and construct cultural dialogue. The development of these three concepts, perception, knowledge and understanding, seems to me the key for examining the principles of Catholic dialogue, exploring its nature and examining its variety of manifestations. Such an exercise, I believe, will stimulate our mind, tune

our spirit and give us the opportunity to journey together in full respect of our faith identities.

1 Perception of the Catholic Church

My first impression in looking at the Catholic Church is that of a historical, complex and multifaceted reality. It presents itself in front of our eyes as a reality that goes beyond the borders of ethnic and tribal belonging, beyond the boundaries of state and nation, beyond the frontiers of language and culture, one could say. In over two thousand years the Catholic Church has acquired adherents from every nation around the globe, undergoing profound and revolutionary changes, suffering martyrdom and persecutions in its members, going through the dark period of using the symbol of the cross to defeat the enemies, incarnating herself in a variety of communities, peoples and societies.

The local churches today are the visible expression of faith, moulded over long years of cultural interaction of the Christian message with traditions, languages, customs and cultures. Any local church reflects the incarnation process of the message, which acts as the golden thread that links the beginning of the Apostolic Church to the local churches in every part of the world. The process of incarnation of the message has never been ideally perfect, because it is transmitted through human means and in human ways. The ideals of the Christian faith help the churches and communities to strive constantly beyond the external manifestations. In that way, local realities are interconnected through the Christian message giving the universal dimension and outlook to the message of Jesus Christ.

But where is the power, the force, the drive that has kept the spiritual vitality of the Catholic Church until today? The answer to this question is the urge to *proclaim*, the call to respond to *the evangelising mission of the Church* in its variety of forms and manifestations *(Evangelii Nuntiandi)*. The Church's duty to announce Jesus Christ to the nations of the world is the spiritual driving force behind what the Church tries to communicate, to transmit and to announce. In other words, the Church has received a missionary responsibility, has been entrusted with a missionary call and has been given a missionary vocation. The missionary activity of the Church is in itself a sign of diversity and pluralism, of historical record

and cultural adaptation, of personal commitment and communal witness, of intellectual tension and external visibility. The Church needs to see her role in the world under the light of the message which Jesus Christ has entrusted into her hands.

It must be admitted that at the start the nature of the Christian Gospel and the circumstances of its origins were anything but favourable to such a world-wide expansion. The life of the Church was going to be not a frenzied proclamation, but a steady programme of expansion throughout the world. The movement of the Church was going to change gradually from Jerusalem outwards to the ends of the world. The opening of the door to the gentiles is therefore one of the signs that we are really living in the age of the Church. The Christian message becomes a beacon that guides countless communities around the world. The content of that message, which the Church has been transmitting through generations, can be summarised in the twofold commandment of the Lord 'Love God and love your neighbour'. Such a commandment has no geographical boundaries nor cultural frontiers. The basis for such a commandment is God's saving work in Our Lord Jesus Christ. We leave to Church historians the delicate task of dividing the various historical periods of the Church. The continuous human and divine interaction has led the Church through many difficult and hard periods of time. The Church has known every possible challenge: persecution, division, war.

Interreligious dialogue is one element of the mission of the Church in the context of religious diversity and cultural pluralism in the contemporary world. The Church lives in the historical reality of the world, which is that of multi-religious faith. The main problem, I believe, is not that of having different faiths and various religious, but rather the secularism of our times that has often affected negatively believers. Ignorance of one's own faith tradition constitutes a serious obstacle to any interfaith work, let alone knowing about your partner's religious beliefs. We must be aware that there are tentative efforts to erase religion from the public sphere or remove it as a 'nonsense' from our societies. This phenomenon happens in democratic and free societies. But we could ask a simple question: can apathy, indifference, ignorance or hatred of religion be allowed in a democratic society? It is often forgotten that religions anywhere in the world have a community dimension and influence all areas of human life. Therefore, religions cannot be reduced to a mere individual exercise forgetting the influence in society. Of course,

in nation-states, where a particular religion such as Islam is the official religion of the country, the influence and weight of that religion are felt on a national level. We know that the Church's relations with Islam have not been a straight and easy line. Violence, hatred and wars have been fought in the name of the faith, be to defend it or to impose it. This leads to a major problem in today's relations between Christians and Muslims, that is the problem of religious liberty and the rights of minorities. As it often the case, the question is put aside by saying that 'everything is fine', 'we have no problem' and that 'we must be good to each other'. But such considerations, however well intentioned they might be, do not solve the real difficulties of those who cannot practice their religion, feel threatened or are constantly harassed.

2 The knowledge of what the Catholic Church means

Four principal terms related to the questions of 'Catholic Dialogue' can be discussed among others: evangelising mission (1), proclamation (2), conversion (3), dialogue (4).

Terms

evangelising mission:

- refers to the mission of the Church in its global outlook. It manifests itself in many forms and in different ways. It touches all levels of society, from the parish presence to the institutions of formation, from education to social work, from health services to the defence of human rights, from the mission outposts to the living faith transmitted in word and deed by the individual believer.
- the Church explains the message and teaches its content, leaving the Spirit to enlighten the hearts and guide those who listen and receive the Christian message.
- the mission of the Church had led to the term 'missions', related especially to the missionary activity of the Church around the world. This has created a continuous interaction between peoples, cultures and traditions. The message and the scriptures have been translated into many languages, so that believers might listen, read and understand in their own language. Nobody can be considered a stranger or unfit for the Christian message.

- the 'missions' are the places where the mission of Christ is communicated and where the seeds of the local churches have been planted. It continues to give to the Church a universal perspective, with its visible international reality, although it will never be perfect.
- seeks to convert through the divine power of the Message: the personal and collective conscience, the activities, the milieu.

proclamation:
- to communicate the Gospel message is the fundamental mission entrusted by Jesus Christ to the apostles. It is the proclamation of the mystery of salvation accomplished by God for all humanity in Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit.
- through baptism the believer becomes a member of the Christian community and enters to form part of the Church. The believer becomes in turn a disciple, a messenger and a witness of Jesus Christ.
- the Church has a community dimension, becomes the visible presence of Jesus Christ and commemorates the mysteries of Christ's death and resurrection in the celebration of the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist.
- the Christian communities have a local dimension as well as a universal outreach. Both aspects are inseparable and essential parts of the proclamation of the Christian message.

conversion:
- is a movement towards God, the return of the heart to God. This may lead to the change of religion and faith adherence.
- in the Christian vision of conversion it is God who illumines and guides the soul of the person, who wants to embrace the Christian faith.
- conversion is never forcing people to join the Church.

dialogue:
- interreligious and intercultural dialogue are a necessity in today's pluralistic world. The global world demands and requires the ability to dialogue. This is an essential part of life from individual and family level to the levels of politics, economics and faith.
- there is a fundamental unity of the human race, in its origins and in its destiny in spite of the profound differences. Humans

cannot be strange to each other when they are considered under the light of the Christian faith.

- it is important to remember that in many conflict situations religion plays a vital role in finding the appropriate and right solutions. But it is equally true to say that believers need also to learn to dialogue with each other.
- believers have no choice but to learn from each other's religious tradition and to find common spaces for a continuous dialogue and interaction.
- in the Church's mission there is a place for interreligious dialogue with believers of other faiths, especially with Jews and Muslims.
- keeping one's own identity and exploring the respective religious convictions (in this sense the term *dialogue* is an integral element of the Church's evangelising mission) are needed in order to dialogue in a constructive way.
- it is true to affirm that Muslims and Christians are engaged in *dialogue of life* among themselves and also with believers of other faiths. This leads to a greater friendship, improved relations of mutual understanding.

3 The Church's approach to religious traditions

There is a positive view of religious traditions on the part of the Church. They reflect the profound mysteries of humanity and represent also 'a ray of that Truth which enlightens all' (*Nostra Aetate*, n. 2). In the vision of the Second Vatican Council, salvation in Jesus Christ is a reality open to all persons of good will. A clear enunciation of this is found in *Gaudium et Spes* n. 22 :'This holds true not for Christians only but also for all persons of good will in whose hearts grace is active invisibly'.The document *Ad Gentes* recognises the presence of'seeds of the word and to the riches which a generous God has distributed among nations' (n.11). The *Lumen Gentium* refers to the good which is 'found sown' not only 'in minds and hearts', but also 'in the rites and customs of peoples' (n. 17). The *Redemptoris Missio* speaks of 'the Gospel values' (n. 20) found in other religious.

There is no doubt that in the Church documents there is a universal breath, that goes beyond any imaginable barrier or frontier. The Church in its earliest days spoke Aramaic, the common language of

Palestine. In the course of time it found it necessary to use a whole array of languages for the proclamation of the faith and its world expansion. These are called the *vernacular* languages, through which the Church has taken profound roots in human societies, touching the simple cords of humanity and transmitting the unique Christian message.

4 The understanding of the Catholic Church

The major concepts that need to orbit around the term 'understanding' are complexity (1), identity (2) and spiritual dimension (3) .

complexity:

- the Catholic Church is a complex and living reality that presents a rich variety of manifestations in the lives of Christian believers.
- we need to be aware today the followers of Jesus Christ are divided. They are represented by the Catholic Church and the other churches. The lack of unity among Christian believers makes the ecumenical dimension of the faith an imperative today.
- such complexity is manifested in the languages, traditions and customs of peoples and societies. However, the Christian message is one and unique, with a multitude of human and historical expressions.
- the Church has a body of belief, a credo, a number of articles of faith that bind together millions of Christian believers. However, this does not stop the Church from being locally incarnated and impregnated in peoples' language, culture and tradition.
- the Church is not a monolithic reality, that shows everywhere the same outward expression. Rather, the same Christian credo acquires a great diversity of local manifestations and human expressions in contemporary societies. It is one spirit that binds together Christian believers.

identity:

- the proclamation and evangelising mission of the Church have helped the Church to shape its identity through history. The Church is a human reality enlivened by the Spirit:

- it is not a straight line, it is a process of growth, development, awareness
- situations and conditions differ, and therefore the Church presents a different face everywhere and anywhere around the world

spiritual dimension
- inside fragile earthenware
- harmony between ideals and reality
- the Church is always in need of a conversion in the life of Christians
- the Church is always in need of a return to God

5 The challenges the church faces ahead

There are four major questions that the Church faces ahead: indifference and secularisation (1) violence and conflicts (2), religious freedom (3), the rights of religious minorities (4). These four aspects colour relations between peoples of different faiths. Religion seems to be left at the road side forgetting that human societies are marked by religious symbols, rituals, festivities and liturgies. The process of secularisation has taken a new step in the last few years and it is that of uprooting religion all together from individuals and filling the void with the thirst for material fulfilment. This process is often translated in anti-religious campaigns under disguised forms of progress in democracy, secular state and civil liberties. But in democratic and free nation states there is no room for indifference and must be no place for any form of anti religious policies or persecutory attitudes towards religions. The question of violence and conflicts demands a realistic approach to Muslim-Christian relations. The past has taught us that religious faith has been used to hurt, persecute, torture and kill the enemy in 'the name of God'. Today we are not free from those who openly stand up in arms and challenge who are considered the enemies of their faith. Poisoning the principles of faith leads to the destruction of human life. The question is not any more that of a different faith, but the fact of refusing to comply with the demands of those who wage war against the 'infidels' inside or outside the community. But perhaps the most vital question of all is that of religious freedom. This means the guarantee and conditions to practice one's own faith. This is a fundamental right, which must be

applicable in every single nation-state without exception. Christians must take a firm stand to defend Muslims in their right to practise their faith, particularly where they are a minority. In the same way Muslims must raise their voice and demand freedom of religion for Christians living in a minority situation. But there are countries such Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Syria where Christians find difficult, if not impossible, to practise freely their faith. The religious identity of Christians is looked upon as something anomalous, even if they are citizens of the country, and their places of worship are not always respected. Slow progress is being made in this respect, but Muslims have a responsibility in this respect, that of defending Christians in their right to religious freedom. The rights of religious minorities are always a problem when one examines the level of religious freedom, places of worship and religious education. Religious minorities must not come to a point in which they have almost to apologise for not following the religion of the majority or are granted protection as if they were an exception to the rule. Here again Christians and Muslims have an important role to play in securing the rights of religious minorities anywhere in the world. We need to reaffirm our stand against any act of terror and violence, as those perpetrated in the name of Islam in London's transport system. Innocent passengers have been viciously killed and many others injured by the action of those who think there is an inseparable wall between Christians and Muslims. This Conference proves that, in spite of the huge problems, nothing will stop Muslim and Christian efforts to understand each other, to respect each other and to work together. This is the best way to defeat pessimism and create a climate of mutual trust in the years to come. A toilsome enterprise, but not an impossible task.

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN SHI^{C}I THOUGHT

Mahmoud Mohammadi Araqi
President of Islamic Culture and Relations Organization
Islamic Republic of Iran

All praise is due to God, the Lord of mankind and the world and the creator of reason, faith and love, and peace be upon all prophets and homage to all divine religions, particularly the great Abrahamic religions and more specifically the last two great divine religions, Christianity and Islam.

I hope that soon we will be able to witness the day of reappearance of Imam Mahdi along with Jesus Christ, the day of establishment of international peace and justice and eradication of oppression and inequity from the entire world.

I convey salutations of the Iranian nation and officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the learned believers attending this session:

سلامي چو بوي خوش آشنائي

'A salutation resembling the pleasant fragrance of acquaintance', as an Iranian poet says.

Let me begin with words, which are used in Islam in exchanging greetings between two individuals and which mean wishing health, security, peace, affection and blessing for all the participants: *al-Salamu alaykum wa rahmatullah.*

I would like to also express my heartfelt gratitude to all the organizers of this cordial session that is pursuing a sacred objective on the basis of the understanding and sympathy among the followers of the divine religions, particularly Islam and Christianity.

Now, let me introduce myself and my country and explain briefly the reasons for attending this session.

I am Mahmoud Mohammadi Araqi from Iran, the ancient and historical land accommodating one of the greatest ancient civilizations of the world, the cradle of monotheism and the greatest religious and

egalitarian revolution of our time. Iran is the land of dialogue among civilizations and cultures and peaceful co-existence among the followers of divine religions. It is the land of great poets and mystics such as Ferdowsi, Sa'di, Hafiz, 'Attar, Khayyam and Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi. It is the land of Avicenna, Farabi, Biruni, Khawrazmi, Mulla Sadra, Mir Damad, Sheikh Baha'i, and Seyed Jamaluddin Asadabadi.

I am president of the 'Organization of Islamic Culture and Relations' whose mission is the expansion of Iran's cultural ties with all countries of the world. One of our most important duties is to make attempts to promote interreligious dialogue. Most of our dialogues to date have been with the Christian world :

1. Four rounds of dialogues with the Vatican and meetings with the late Pope John Paul II in the years between 1995 to 2003. The fifth is taking place in November 2005.
2. Four rounds of dialogues with the Russian Orthodox Church in the years between 1990 to 2004.
3. Four rounds of biennial dialogues with the Austrian Saint Gabriel Institute in the years between 1995 to 2003.
4. Four rounds of dialogues with the Church of England at the University of Birmingham in the years between 1990 to 2002.
5. Five rounds of biennial dialogues with the Greek Orthodox Church in the years between 1982 to 2000.
6. Three rounds of dialogues with the World Council of Churches in the years between 1995 to 2002.
7. Dialogues with the Giovanni Agnelli Foundation in Turin, Italy.
8. Two rounds of dialogues with the Armenian Church based in Antelias, Beirut.
9. Two rounds of talks with some of Churches of the USA specially the Roman Catholic Church and the Catholic University of Washington.

Besides the dialogues with Christians, the Iranian Center for Interreligious Dialogue has held discussions with Zoroastrians and Buddhists and has actively attended international summits and conferences such as the Millennium Peace Summit (August 2000, New York), World

Council of Religious Leaders (January 2003, Bangkok) and the Parliament of World Religions (July 2004, Barcelona).

It has to be noted that dialogue, and specifically the interreligious dialogue, is deeply rooted in the values and ideals of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Islamic law guarantees the freedom of religious rites and rituals, the security of churches and religious places, the honour and dignity of religious figures, juridical independence, freedom of economic activities and freedom in social relations. Specifically, Articles 13, 14, 15, 26 and 64 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran stress the rights of religious minorities. In this spirit, in 2000 the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Sayyed Mohammad Khatami, proposed to the General Assembly of the United Nations to designate the year 2001 as the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations which was unanimously accepted.

Fortunately, our contemporary world has witnessed the entrance of many scholars, scientists, politicians and religious figures into the realm of 'dialogue'. In spite of the introduction of some theories on the clash of civilizations and also unilateral policies adopted by great powers, today, we witness numerous meetings and conferences on peace and justice, especially on dialogue among religions and cultures across the world.

We hope that dialogue will soon become the dominant paradigm of political theory and practice and that our contemporary world will become replete with legal, political and international dialogues instead of military skirmishes and conflicts. As Imam Khomeini once put it: 'We hope that the day will come when all the machine-guns will be replaced by pens.'

Of course the practice of dialogue among civilizations and cultures in our country, history and religion is a longstanding tradition. According to some surveys, the Iranians have always worshipped One God; Iran is the birthplace of Zoroastrianism and the land of great religions. It was from Iran that various religions went in ancient times to distant countries, such as China. The emergence of Zoroastrianism and its spread across the world as well as the presence of religions and their followers in the history of Iran deserve proper study. Iranian Zoroastrians used to accord respect to the natural elements such as water, wind, earth, and fire, but did not worship them. In fact as mentioned in the *Shahnama*, they worshipped the purified Lord. Ferdowsi says:

> The ancestors had their religions
> They worshipped the Lord

They never adored the fire
They worshipped the Purified Lord
The red fire in their fire-temple
Was just like a stone in the altar

According to historical documents, the Achaemenid empire, the first empire of the world, was founded by Cyrus in Iran in the first millennium BC. The marvels at Persepolis, one of the world's outstanding monuments, belong to that era. The name of Cyrus is frequently mentioned favourably in history books. Jewish holy scripture, the Torah, calls him the saviour of the Jewish nation from the yoke of captivity of the Babylonians. Some Qur'anic exegetes and scholars such as Allamah Tabataba'i believe that he was the Dhu'l-Qarnayn mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. Xenophon, the Greek historian of the fourth century BC, calls him 'an insightful, frank and honest person who has enchanted everybody.' He was interested in the development of the cities and farmlands and loved greenery and prosperity. He converted the capital of Iran, Pasargad, into a beautiful garden-city, calling it a *pardis*. The words *Firdaws* in Arabic and *Paradise* in English are both derived from the Persian word *pardis*.

Jamasbnama, a book attributed to Jamasb the Sage, which contains questions and answers between Goshtasb Shah and Jamasb the Sage, for the first time gave the good tidings of the emergence of Jesus Christ as a divine prophet.[1] Near the time of the birth of Jesus during the reign of Hebruvis in Jewish Bethlehem, a number of Zoroastrians suddenly arrived in Bait al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) from the East saying: 'Where is the newborn baby who is the king of the Jews, for we have observed his star in the East and have come to worship him ... And when they saw the star over there, they became extremely happy, entered the house and found the baby along with his mother. They bowed down and respected him.'[2] Marco Polo writes in his travelogue: I have visited the graves of these three priests [the abovementioned three Iranian priests] in the city of Saba (Saveh) in a splendid tomb.[3]

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[1] *Mosaheb Encyclopaedia*, Vol 1, p. 72.
[2] Matthew, Chapter 2.
[3] Marco Polo, *Travelogue*, tr. Habibullah Sahihi, p. 35.

Iran in Islamic civilization and its contribution to the spread of cultural dialogue and exchange

As you know, since the very advent of Islam in the seventh century CE, the message of Islam entered Iran. As a matter of fact, due to class struggle and oppression and social discrimination, the liberating message of Islam had conquered the hearts of the Iranian people before any serious military encounter.

Iranians embraced Islam because of its ideological superiority over their religious heritage and contributed greatly to Islamic theological, philosophical and scientific literature. Iranian scholars, philosophers and scientists paved the way for the spread of a brand of Islamic rationality called the Shi'a school of thought. This school has continued to the present in the history of Iran, particularly in the golden age of Islamic civilization.

Islam in its essence has high regard for contemplation, reason, science, knowledge and logic and has elaborated upon the relationship between reason and religion, and science and faith. From the Islamic viewpoint, not only there is no contradiction between science and religion and reason and faith, but they complement each other in fulfilling the needs of humanity in every aspect of life.

The Holy Qur'an in numerous verses has praised knowledge, contemplation and rationality and denounced ignorance and illogical imitation. The word 'Qur'an' is derived from the Arabic word *qira'a* which means 'reading' and the first commandment revealed to the Prophet of Islam was: 'Read in the Name of Your Lord.'[4]

Here I would like to refer to only two Qur'anic verses, which directly invite people to hear and listen to others and also invite interreligious dialogue on the basis of commonalities. Without any doubt, dialogue and listening to the words of others is one of the most important ways for learning, contemplation, realization of the truth and choosing the better option.

> 'Give good news to my servants those who listen to the word, then follow the best of it; those are they whom Allah has guided, and those it is who are the men of understanding.'[5]

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[4] The Holy Qur'an, 96: 1.

[5] The Holy Qur'an, 24: 17-18.

> 'Say: O followers of the Book! Come to an equitable proposition between us and you that we shall not serve any but Allah and (that) we shall not associate aught with Him, and (that) some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah; but if they turn back, then say: Bear witness that we are Muslim.'[6]

The roots of the tradition of dialogue and rational argument in Shi'i Islam

There are two important principles in Shi'i Islam:

1 Rationalism versus the dominant current of the Ash'arites in the early centuries of Islam.
2 Justice, in theology and in social relations.

Besides the above-mentioned two principles the Imamate is one of the pillars of Shi'i Islam. Shi'i Islam maintains that twelve infallible Imams succeeded the Holy Prophet of Islam to guide the Muslim community. The eleven Imams who have passed away were infallible and the Twelfth Imam who is still alive but in occultation is infallible too.

To be infallible implies that out of their knowledge and piety they administer justice in its complete form. This combination of rationality, justice and piety in the Imams has formed the way they and their followers have organized their relations among themselves and with other Muslims and the people of other faiths. One key factor in establishing such relations has always been dialogue. Following the example of the Prophet and Imams, a true Shi'a is the one who:

1 does not accept or reject any person or idea without reason
2 does not oppress others or humiliate them; rather he treats them with full fairness and respect
3 does not impose his own ideas on others

This shows how rationality and the search for justice which are two outstanding characters of the Shi'a faith have greatly contributed to

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[6] The Holy Qur'an, 3: 64.

the emergence of a culture of dialogue. I think this shows also how closely the topic of dialogue is related to the general theme of this conference, i.e. faith and reason.

Dialogue in the precept and tradition of Prophet Muhammad

The tradition of dialogue in the precept of the Holy Prophet and his successors, not only with believers in the divine religions but also with unbelievers and atheists and even with enemies, existed and continued as a perpetual process. This process has been discussed as an important chapter in historical and theological books in detail and in brief. I will only mention some brief examples along with some viewpoints of Western scholars and thinkers on this subject. I will give further examples with their references in the footnotes.

One famous Shi'a scholar who compiled an independent book on this subject is Abu Mansur Ahmad ibn 'Ali Tabarsi. He compiled *Al-Ihtijaj* in two volumes containing some nine hundred pages. This great religious scholar of the fifth and sixth centuries (AH) gave a detailed account of one of these debates in about fifteen pages in the first volume of his book.

A person asks the following question of Imam Hasan 'Askari: 'Did the Prophet Muhammad hold debates with Jews and pagans?' The Imam replied: 'Yes, many times. And the Imam explained one of these debates in detail. The Imam said that one day the Prophet was sitting in the courtyard of the Ka'ba, in Mecca. A group of people gathered, the Imam mentioned the names of five of them who were very famous. Of course they had a pre-planned scenario for the debate. One of them said: 'If you are a divine prophet like Moses, then there must be a thunderbolt against us as a divine punishment after these questions and protests because our questions are harsher than those posed to Moses by his people.' The above account was one example of the debates between the Prophet Muhammad and different religious groups. (Tabarsi, *Al-Ihtijaj*, Vol. 1, pp. 66–115)

Dialogue of Imams with different groups

This interesting methodology and beautiful tradition was continued after the Holy Prophet by his successors, the Imams. Of course, among the

Imams the debates of Imam ʿAli, Imam Hasan, Imam Muhammad Baqir, Imam Jaʿfar Sadiq, Imam Kazim and Imam Riza are better known than those of others. Interestingly, these leaders not only debated personally and discussed matters with contemporary religious leaders, but also they taught this method to their disciples, whose names have been recorded.

I would like to mention some examples of these debates along with some viewpoints of Western scholars. For example during the time of the first caliph, Abu Bakr, a Christian priest came from Rome and brought with him a lot of gifts. He said: 'I want to discuss with Islamic leaders and if I get the result I will give these gifts to them.' The priest was guided by Salman to meet Imam ʿAli and after a very long discussion he became very happy, thanked Imam ʿAli and delivered his gifts to him (Tabarsi, Vol. 2, p. 484).

Another example was the discussion of a Jew from Damascus with Imam ʿAli in the presence of some companions of the Holy Prophet (*ibid.*, p. 497).

Also during the time of the second caliph, ʿUmar, a very famous Jewish scholar visited ʿUmar and asked him to have a free discussion with him. The caliph sent him to Imam ʿAli and a very long debate was held between them (*ibid.*, p. 537).

I would also refer to the instance of a very long discussion between Imam ʿAli and a Greek philosopher narrated by Imam ʿAskari (*ibid.*, p. 547); another example is a very long tradition of Imam ʿAli's dialogue with an atheist. After a long discussion finally the atheist was convinced and believed in God. Yet another instance is that of a famous atheist who had different discussions with Imam ʿAli. His name was ʿAbdullah ibn Kuwah (*ibid.*).

The scholars of the Strasburg Research Centre have acknowledged that free debates and interreligious dialogue with followers of other religions and schools of thought was a principle in Islam, particularly in the Shiʿa school of thought:

> Free debates about religious subjects gained momentum when Imam Jaʿfar Sadiq established the Shiʿa educational school. In that school religious discussion entered into scientific studies and intermingled with them and after some years this very method developed to the extent that great scholars appeared in the Shiʿa school of thought. (Mansuri, *Imam-e Sadiq: Maghz-e Mutafakker-e Jahan-e Tashayyuʿ*, 1977, p. 136)

Renowned historians such as Gustav Lebon, Will Durant, Georgi Zaidan have underlined the dialogue of Muslims with the followers of other religions.[7] The spread of Islamic culture was such that it enchanted Fredrick II, the conqueror of Palestine, to the extent that his manners and behaviour looked like that of Muslims:

> His enemies used to say: The Emperor liked and approved of the decrees of Muhammad more than those of Jesus Christ and his friendship with the Muslims was stronger than that with the Christians.[8]

One of the famous discourses Tabarsi mentioned is a famous debate between Imam Sadiq and Ibn Abi al-ʿAwja (Tabarsi, 1413 AH, Vol. 2, p. 297).

ʿAllama Tabarsi also mentioned a very long dialogue between Rome and Islam during the rule of Muʿawiya. It was not direct but through intermediate communication. The Roman ruler sent some questions about theology and Islam to Muʿawiya. And because he could not answer the questions, he sent the questions through an unknown scholar to Imam ʿAli who asked his son Hasan to answer them (*ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 30).

Many examples of the debates of Imam Sadiq have been given in the same source (*ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 197-322).

There were many debates, especially with materialist and atheist scientists during the era of Imam Riza. In this period debates went beyond mutual discussions to formal group discussions and during the Caliphate of Ma'mun in Khurasan (Iran), he organized formal discussions between the scientific and religious leaders from different groups and established a special organization named Bait al-Hikma (House of Wisdom). We can read many examples of these discussions between Imam Riza and some of the religious leaders of Jews, Christians, followers of David, Sabeans, Zoroastrians, and many Muslim theologians in the presence of Ma'mun. It is very interesting that Imam Riza discussed matters with every participant on the basis of their own scriptures and schools of thought. (*ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 354-365 and 401)

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[7] *Andisheh-e Hawzeh*, Vol 9, No. 6, July 2004, pp. 35 and 36.

[8] *Ibid.*

Finally, I would like to once again thank the organizers for providing me with this opportunity to share my views with the respected participants. I hope that such discussions will pave the way for further understanding among the followers of divine religions and contribute to international peace and security.

A CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE ON INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Abbot Timothy Wright OSB

Experts tell us there are two parts to our brain and that our thinking sometimes betrays quite clearly the dominance of one side or the other. In works of research and evaluation it is usually the left side of the brain that will dominate, allowing individuals to marshal information and present well-argued cases. The right side of the brain is more intuitive, led more by feelings.

Looking at perspectives on interreligious dialogue, it is clear that it is not a matter of just deciding whether such dialogue is merely listing facts and speeches, led by a step-by-step logic, or recounting images, experiences and feelings expressed on different occasions. Interreligious dialogue is complex. It is *not* an exact science, it is about relationships, relationships between people who hold very different views of life, from very different cultures and whose ways of thinking as expressed through their religion may only have slight resemblances.

In such circumstances the human 'chemistry' may be as important as the matters discussed or shared. For interreligious dialogue to be fruitful there has to be some sort of personal empathy, some sort of intuitive understanding of the other. It has to be personal. And words cannot always express that relationship fully.

When interreligious dialogue is assessed simply by what is written a different picture will emerge. It will, of course, identify beliefs, teachings and practices, reveal similarities and differences and provide issues for further [academic] discussion. But the real thing is more than this. It is living and sharing together, it is discovering how the energy of faith works differently in people, how different religions have evolved in different parts of the world.

From a Catholic perspective, one individual in recent history has stamped his personality, enthusiasm and commitment on interreligious dialogue in a way that no other religious leader has done, setting an

example which will be difficult to follow—Pope John Paul II. It is not only that without his commitment to it, Catholic interreligious dialogue would not have such a high profile as it does today, it is that his magnetism attracted other religious leaders from every corner of the globe. They came to Assisi for the first World Day of Prayer for Peace in 1986, they came again ten years later, they visited him in the Vatican, he visited them in their countries and they came to his funeral. They admired his leadership and the way he used that leadership in the political forum; they admired his humility, too, so evident when he was in their presence.

But to gain some sense of the Catholic perspective on interreligious dialogue is not just a matter of reading the texts of John Paul II (and, indeed, of those who had gone before him). It is trying to imagine the energy and commitment of the man who spoke those words. Fundamentally, therefore, I believe that Catholic interreligious dialogue is first of all an act of meditation, reflecting on words that convey a degree of struggle that this achievement has involved. It has not been an easy development. Pope John Paul took many bold steps during his long pontificate. What he said is one thing, but the friendship and admiration he attracted is another, as shown by the pilgrimages, travels, gestures, but, most important of all, the dimensions of his spirituality.

More than any other branch of Catholic faith, interreligious dialogue requires a contemplative spirit. It is not just a matter of theology, or of joint commitment to working for justice or peace; it is, at the very centre, the revelation of God in the hearts of each of us, and each of us being big enough, large-hearted enough to share that revelation with people of very different religions and cultures.

That requires boldness and strength of will. But above all it requires an intense faith that God is truly alive in the hearts of all people and that our Christian responsibility, as beneficiaries of the gift of Incarnation, Redemption and Sanctification, is to reach out, identify, and affirm, that majestic presence in people who may have no understanding of that gift. And of course, as John Paul II himself showed, this must all be done in a spirit of humility and journeying—being on pilgrimage—alongside fellow pilgrims. This is a work that can only be done by one who contemplates.

The kingdom of God is what we all yearn for, is open to all and is the work of the Holy Spirit active in our world.

With that truth in mind, how might we appreciate the work of interreligious dialogue? I offer a simple analogy.

Imagine the Kingdom of God is like one enormous puzzle with billions of pieces, of which we are one. It is quite impossible for us to envisage the whole puzzle, let alone see how we can put the pieces together. What interreligious dialogue does is encourage us not to fit pieces together to create one little 'puzzle within a puzzle', my own little secure world bounded by its own border pieces. There is only one boundary to the Kingdom of God, and that is the boundary established by God in Christ. To try and establish our own boundary is to put oneself in danger: the danger of being exclusive, judgmental and possibly a little arrogant towards those outside. But the temptation to create such 'puzzles within the puzzle' lies deep in our nature because it fulfils a deep need for security.

As a piece in this puzzle we have to learn to work with, join up with other pieces, some of which emerge from our family and friends, some from our brethren in other religions, and some again from people to whom we reach, who are very different. In each case we are bringing pieces together, we are inspiring them to stick together, we are creating a small part of the picture, within the boundaries set by God.

Work on that puzzle—one might say that puzzle which is interreligious dialogue—is a work that can only succeed if rooted in prayer. It is in prayer that we learn to appreciate what we are really about. But this is not prayer together, it is knowing that the other is praying in his/her way while I pray in mine. It is recognizing clearly that prayer has a priority on the time and energies of all involved. It is precisely being aware of this that makes the whole process so much more stimulating.

Interreligious dialogue without prayer is merely words and concepts. If it is to be real dialogue, then each person involved must feel able to articulate his/her deepest conviction about God, life, the world, evil. That is best done by giving priority to prayer. Pope John Paul II himself recognised this in calling world religious leaders to a day of *prayer*, so that each could pray according to their own traditions. Speaking in Assisi on 27 October 1986, the Pope said that prayer 'expresses a relationship with a supreme power that surpasses our human capacities alone. The fact that we have come here [to pray together for peace] does not imply any intention of seeking a religious consensus among ourselves or of negotiating our faith convictions. Neither does it mean that religions can be reconciled at the level of a common commitment in an earthly project which would surpass them all. Nor is it a concession to relativism in religious beliefs, because every human being must sincerely follow his or her upright conscience

with the intention of seeking and obeying the truth. Our meeting attests only—and this is its real significance for the people of our time—that in the great battle for peace, humanity, in its very diversity, must draw from its deepest and most vivifying sources where its conscience is formed and upon which is founded the moral action of all people. ...Religions are many and varied, and they reflect the desire of men and women down through the ages to enter into a relationship with the Absolute Being. Prayer entails conversion of heart on our part. It means deepening our sense of the ultimate Reality.This is the very reason for our coming together in this place' (Address to the representatives of the Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities and of the world religions, Basilica of St Mary of the Angels, Assisi, 27 October 1986) .

It is worth dwelling further on the Pope's own reflections, some might say his explanation of what he called the 'most closely-followed religious event of 1986', contained in his address to the Roman Curia on 22 December:'The very fact of gathering in Assisi to pray, fast and walk in silence ... was a clear sign of the profound unity, despite concrete divisions, of those who, in religion, are looking for spiritual and transcendental values in response to the great questions within the human heart. ... The Assisi event can be seen as a visible illustration, a factual lesson, a catechesis intelligible to everyone, of what the commitment to ecumenism and interreligious dialogue means, as recommended and promoted by the Second Vatican Council. ... In an extraordinary way, at Assisi one discovered the unique value which prayer has for peace; and even that one cannot have peace without prayer, the prayer of all, each in his own way in the search for truth. Here one sees ... another wonderful manifestation of that unity that unites beyond the differences and divisions that are known ... every authentic prayer is called forth by the Holy Spirit, who is mysteriously present in the heart of every person. At Assisi one also saw this: the unity which stems from the fact that every man and woman is capable of prayer: that is, submitting totally to God and seeing oneself as poor before Him. Prayer is one of the means of carrying out God's plan among men (cf. *Ad Gentes* 3).'

As we read these quotations we cannot help but be struck how increasingly prayer (and, in the case of Assisi, silence and fasting) and simplicity come to the fore as the essential dimension in dialogue, a dimension which can be so easily forgotten in the desire to say the right thing, establish the correct relationship, and even set up well-intentioned

interreligious projects. Careful meditation reveals a theology of the spiritual life and a recognition that before all else it is here where an encounter can be truly fruitful. But it is not without its challenges.

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that the Assisi model provides the answer to everything and that everything is that simple (and the organisers of the Assisi event would say, I'm sure, that arranging appropriate prayer spaces for all participants was more than just a logistical problem). There *are* difficulties in praying together with those of different religions. The problem was faced quietly but forcefully before the Assisi meetings, and Pope Benedict XVI, as Cardinal Ratzinger, had written urging great caution over the validity of interreligious prayer (some religious commentators draw attention to the fact that Cardinal Ratzinger did not attend the first World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi, saying that he disagreed with the Pope over the very concept of such an event. To Ratzinger, it was 'an obfuscation of the identity of Christianity' cf. *Benedict XVI: The Pope and his agenda*, Sandro Magister, http://www.chiesa.espressonline.it/dettaglio.jsp?id=28889&eng=y). His careful caution contrasts markedly with the enthusiasm that comes across in the words of Pope John Paul II—not, I think a difference of substance, but certainly one of style.

In *Truth and Tolerance* (Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2004), the then Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith warned that 'those who meet [to pray for peace] know that their understandings of the divine, and hence their way of turning to him, are so varied that shared prayer would be a fiction, far from the truth. They meet to give a sign of their shared longing: but they pray—albeit simultaneously—in separate places, each in his own fashion' (*op. cit.* p. 106).

At first, this might seem a setback, a distancing from the heady days of Assisi. But Cardinal Ratzinger in fact sets out the conditions for multi-religious prayer exactly as Pope John Paul II had, with people of different religions praying at the same time in different locations in the same place. This exceptional prayer is a sign of a common cry for help, stirring the hearts of men to stir also the heart of God. It is important to recognize that such situations can lead, inevitably, to misunderstandings and indifference, with a subsequent weakening of real faith. Hence this prayer should be exceptional and, rightly, be accompanied with careful explanation of what is happening.

The Catholic perspective now championed by Pope Benedict

XVI has, at its heart, a clear sense of the identity of Christianity, but a clear sense of the need for prayer, too. Once again, in *Truth and Tolerance*, his words are unequivocal: 'We can pray with each other only if we are agreed who or what God is and if there is therefore basic agreement as to what praying is. ... Yet there must also be fundamental agreement... about what is worth praying about and what might be the content of prayer. I see the petitions of the Lord's Prayer as a measure of what we may rightly ask of God, in order to pray in a manner worthy of God' (*op. cit.*, p. 108).

Such clarity is not a brake on interreligious dialogue, but a marker, ensuring that all participants understand that we enter into that dialogue firm in our belief in the uniqueness of God and Jesus Christ and equally firm in our commitment to the proclamation of His Gospel. That commitment, that belief, is rooted in prayer, a sentiment wonderfully expressed by the Benedictine Fr Pierre de Bethune in *Pro Dialogo*, the publication of the Vatican's own Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue: 'Common prayer is the starting point of true encounter. And when you stay there together, praying or meditating, the landscape of the dialogue changes radically: the Holy Spirit himself takes the initiative. It appears then that the genuine interreligious approach cannot be centred on the quest for profit, even spiritual, but on receiving God. Interreligious dialogue thus becomes a religious experience no longer an enriching experience, but an occasion for purifying one's heart, for evangelical impoverishment and going back to the essential ... Prayer is indeed the real bond between humans and the only lasting guarantee of peace. As long as dialogue cannot be realized at this level it remains crumbly, because the meeting has not yet taken place in its most essential point ... Fr Christian de Chergé writes: The first time a Sufi community of the neighbourhood asked to meet us—it was Christmas 1979, its spokesman had been careful to make it precise because it was for sharing prayer they wanted to meet us. 'We do not want, he said, to engage in a theological dialogue with you, for it has often raised barriers which are man made. Now we feel called by God to unity. So we have to let God invent something new between us. This can be done only through prayer' (*Pro Dialogo* 98, p. 164).

At first sight some might say that there is a tension, even an opposition, between what Benedict XVI and Pierre de Bethune are saying. But I think not. Remember the jigsaw puzzle, with its billions of pieces. Each of these contributions are fragments of a whole picture, pieces in a jigsaw puzzle. There are many other pieces, but these contributions—and

that of Pope John Paul II—refer to distinct parts of the puzzle which has yet to be fitted together. What is certain is that eventually they will be fitted together. After all, the three authors belong to the same Christian faith. So they, along with many others, will eventually see the full significance of their view of prayer in a picture that is still unclear, especially for those living, working and praying among very different pieces of the whole. We know there will be a moment when that will happen. Our prayer, in part at least, is energised by this longing.

JOHN PAUL II, ISLAM AND THE CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM ENCOUNTER

Andrew Unsworth

Introduction

Pope Benedict XVI has already made significant speeches and gestures which demonstrate that the positive respect for Muslims and the religion of Islam which has been developed in the post-conciliar period will continue.[1] However, it is commonly agreed that during his pontificate Benedict's predecessor, John Paul II, did more to promote better relations between Christians and Muslims than any other Pope in history. During the pontificate of John Paul II (1978-2005) scores of addresses, homilies, and written documents of various kinds were produced, which, either in whole, or in part, refer to Muslims and to aspects of the Islamic faith.

An analysis of the solemn teaching documents produced during the pontificates of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II demonstrates the need to be aware of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and of clarifications and developments *since* the Council. The manner in which such documents use theological and religious language is indicative of the nuanced way in which the Catholic Church has clarified and developed its description of Muslims, and the religious beliefs and practices of Islam.

The question of the accurate exegesis of the texts which refer to Islam is a neglected feature of scholarly debate. Despite the age and significance of many of these documents many textual-critical issues have yet to be resolved adequately; especially with regard to a failure by many

[1] Pope Benedict XVI, 'The First Message of the New Pontiff: Benedict XVI, A Pope of Christ, Communion, Collegiality', Rome, 20 April 2005 (Vatican Information Service); 'Inaugural Mass Homily: "Do not be afraid of Christ! He Takes Nothing Away and Gives Everything"', Rome, 24 April 2005 (Zenit News Agency); 'Papal Address to Representatives of Other Religions and Confessions: "The Common Passion for Unity is Authentic and Great"', Rome, 26 April 2005 (Zenit News Agency); 'Address of His Holiness: Meeting with Representatives of Some Muslim Communities', Cologne, 20 August 2005 (Vatican News Agency). [www.vatican].

scholars, both Christian and Muslim, to understand the subtleties of the original (often Latin) texts. It is not possible to go into great detail here, but one crucial need in the theological exchange between Catholics and Muslims, especially in the English-speaking world, is to correct theological misunderstandings based on inadequate English translations of the texts of Vatican II, and other documents produced by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. In this study I wish to highlight the need to understand the specific literary genres which exist. The various textual genres are themselves indicative of the different levels of teaching authority associated with them within Catholic religious thought.

The description of Muslims, and the interpretation of the religion of Islam which they contain, indicates the presence of a principle which I will refer to as 'hetero-description'. 'Hetero-description' is the attempt by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church to describe Muslims, and the beliefs and practices of their religion, in a way which takes account of a Muslim self-description.[2] I will argue that this hermeneutical principle is implicitly present in the Magisterium of Paul VI, particularly the documents of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). I will argue that 'hetero-description' became an increasingly explicit feature of the post-conciliar teaching of the Church during the pontificate of the late Pope John Paul II.

'Solemn' and 'Ordinary' teaching documents produced by the Magisterium

The various teaching documents which come from the Vatican are of four major types:

1) Those which come from Ecumenical Councils, such as *Lumen Gentium* and *Nostra Aetate*: Although these documents can exist in different genres

[2] See Gavin D'Costa, *The Meeting of the Religions and the Trinity*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 2000, p. 100. D'Costa develops the categories of 'hetero-interpretation', which is 'theological evaluation' of the meaning of a religion other than one's own; and 'auto-interpretation' as 'the sense of those within that tradition'. I would want to establish another distinct category. 'Hetero description' occurs when a person describes the religious beliefs and practices of another without attempting a theological evaluation. This is an attempt to replicate the self-description of one's interlocutor. Applying a hetero-descriptive approach does not deny that there is a legitimate place for 'hetero-interpretation'.

and possess differing levels of authority, they have a special importance because they constitute the teachings of the bishops of the Church in communion with the Pope as their head, when gathered as the supreme teaching body of the Catholic Church.[3]

2) 'Solemn' papal teaching documents: These can be of differing genres and levels of authority, but as a whole they possess the highest levels of teaching authority. There are important references to Muslims and the religion of Islam in the solemn teaching documents produced during the pontificate of Paul VI and John Paul II. These include: 'Apostolic Constitutions', 'Apostolic Exhortations', 'Apostolic Letters', '*Motu Proprio*', and most importantly, 'Encyclicals'. These solemn documents are sometimes, although not exclusively, written in Latin. In this sense the Latin original is regarded as the 'official' text, although several other versions exist in modern languages, such as English, Italian, French, Spanish etc. These translations can be ones produced subsequently for a specific need, or released simultaneously alongside the Latin text in order to facilitate easy and instantaneous access to key teachings. In the latter case they too are 'official', in the sense that they are prepared and authorized by the Vatican, but the Latin text remains the so-called 'typical edition'. The 'typical edition' ought to be regarded as the most authoritative text, unless otherwise indicated.[4]

3) 'Ordinary' papal teaching documents:
These are less definitive statements and teachings, contained in papal letters, addresses, allocutions, homilies etc.

4) Teaching documents produced by Roman Dicasteries:
The Curial departments within the Vatican are given different responsibilities and competencies, such as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID).[5]

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[3] Ormond Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles*, Paulist Press, New York, 2004. See the five volumes of Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A Komonchak, (eds.), *The History of Vatican II*, Orbis, New York.

[4] More recently teaching documents have been promulgated simultaneously in several modern languages (usually European ones), and then a Latin text is produced later.

[5] See Thomas J Reese, *Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church*, University Press, Harvard, 1996.

These departments assist the Pope in the exercise of his universal pastoral and teaching ministry in the Church. [6]

Soon after Vatican II the newly established Secretariat for Non-Christians (subsequently renamed the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue) was commissioned by Paul VI to prepare some written *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*. The first edition was published in French in 1970. In 1981 a totally revised and expanded second edition was commissioned by John Paul II, this time to be prepared by a team of virtually all of the most distinguished Catholic scholars in Islamic Studies in the world at that time. Led by Maurice Borrmans and Ary Roest Crollius, their brief was to clarify and present a Catholic position on a number of issues, in order to facilitate high quality theological reflection and best practice among Catholics engaged in dialogue with Muslims.

The *Guidelines* is not a 'conciliar' or 'papal' document as such; however, many scholars who refer to this document wrongly suppose that it is solely the work of Maurice Borrmans. Rather, it has the status of an official text produced under the auspices of a Roman dicastery, which has been commissioned and sanctioned by the Holy See. Texts such as these present non-definitive, in the sense of non-binding, teaching, which is consistent with the 'mind' of the official Church on the issues with which they deal. The contents of the *Guidelines* are consistent with, and in some cases offer a further clarification or development of, statements already made by the Magisterium of the Church with regard to these matters.[7] In other cases

[6] Catholic theologians often refer to these documents collectively as 'the Magisterium', although technically speaking those who produce the documents constitute the Magisterium, that is, those who hold a teaching office, and have the necessary 'powers' by virtue of holding such an office, to teach doctrine authoritatively. Those who are competent to exercise the supreme teaching office within the Church are, primarily speaking, the Pope, sometimes acting alone, and the college of bishops with the Pope as the head of the Episcopal 'college'. As Francis Sullivan has observed, 'In modern Catholic usage, the term "magisterium" has come to be associated almost exclusively with the teaching role and authority of the hierarchy', *Creative Fidelity, Weighing and Interpreting Documents of the Magisterium*, Paulist Press, New York, 1996, p. 1; although in a broader sense theologians share in this responsibility, in that it is the ecclesial role of the theologian, or expert, to advise and assist the Pope and bishops in the exercise of their teaching office. Indeed all faithful Catholics have a role to play in the teaching and observance of sound doctrine and theological opinion.

[7] Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims: Prepared by Maurice Borrmans*, (trans.), R. Marston Speight, Paulist Press, New York, English trans., The Missionary Society of St Paul the Apostle, 1990. Originally published in French as *Orientations pour un Dialogue entre Chretiens et Musulmans*, Les Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1981.

the *Guidelines* may treat issues which have not yet been commented upon by the Magisterium in a formal way. In this case they help to encourage and orient further reflection on unresolved questions.

Arguably, Paul VI and especially John Paul II, did more to promote better relations between Christians and Muslims than any other Popes in history. This *rapprochement* was achieved via the medium of 'pastoral visits' to many parts of the world where Muslims are in a majority, or where Muslims make up a sizable proportion of the population.[8] The pontificate of John Paul II saw the promotion of better diplomatic relations between the Holy See and several 'Muslim countries'.[9] Many of the dicasteries, especially PCID, papal nuncios, ambassadors and envoys involved in this work also act of behalf of the Holy See.[10]

Many of John Paul II's speeches (more formally known as 'allocutions'), homilies and spoken messages were delivered during 'pastoral

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[8] A complete record and statistical analysis of these visits, and the teachings which resulted from them, can now be found on the official web-site of the Holy See [www.vatican]. I will make several references to such texts. Where no bibliographical reference is given, sources cited can be viewed at this website using its search engine. See also the two best biographies in English: Peter Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI: The First Modern Pope*, Harper-Collins, London, 1993; George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II 1920-2005*, Harper, New York, 2005.

[9] It is important to make a distinction here between states governed according to Shari'ah Law (often referred to as 'Islamic States') and countries where Muslims are in a majority.

[10] PCID has several responsibilities. This council has official relations with the Al-Azhar University in Cairo, and the Islamic Call (*Da'wah*) Society. It promotes the study of religions and dialogue, receives delegations of Muslim dignitaries and scholars and sends its own staff abroad to act as members of official delegations and representatives of the Holy See. Its brief is to deal with 'religious questions' and 'does not extend to socio-political issues'. It consults officially with Muslim scholars and has a special working group dedicated to the study of Islam, and to matters related to the international Christian-Muslim theological and religious dialogue. At the time of writing , on 11 March 2006, PCID and the Pontifical Council for Culture were brought into a closer formal relationship with one another 'for the time being' under the headship of Cardinal Paul Poupard. This arrangement is not yet a 'merger' of the two offices although further restructuring of these offices may well take place in the future. In February 2006 the former head of PCID Archbishop Michael L Fitzgerald, an Arabist and expert on the religion of Islam was re-assigned as Papal Nuncio to Egypt and the Arab League of twenty two nations in order to focus on issues of a more explicitly socio-political nature; see Michael L Fitzgerald, 'The Challenge of Dialogue' Parts I and II, in *Mission Outlook*, October, 2003, pp. 1-5, and January, 2004, pp. 5-8; 'From Heresy to Religion: Islam Since Vatican II', *Encounter*, No.296, July/August 2003, pp. 1-14; also PCID, 'Continuing on the Path of Dialogue: Message for the End of Ramadan, 1426 AH/2005AD'; PCID/CEP, *Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, 19 May, 1991, [http://www.vatican..../rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.htm].

visits' or 'papal pilgrimages' to many parts of the world where Muslims are in a majority, or where Muslims make up a sizeable proportion of the population; others were delivered to general audiences in Rome, or during audiences with groups of bishops on '*ad limina*' visits; during the meetings of bishops in synod; or to other groups of dignitaries or visitors to the Vatican. These speeches were addressed to different groups, such as predominantly Christian groups living in Muslim majority countries; to Christian leaders; to Muslims, be they large groups, made up of a cross-section of people, or more specifically groups of religious leaders and scholars; or to large numbers of young people, be they Muslims, Christians or a mixture of both.

The pontificate of John Paul II saw the promotion of better diplomatic relations between the Holy See and several 'Muslim countries', a sizeable number of papal speeches are those which were addressed to Muslim diplomats acting as representatives of their respective countries, to papal diplomats in Muslim majority countries, addresses given to the Vatican diplomatic corps as a whole, or speeches delivered to organizations such as the UN.

The great majority of these speeches were pre-prepared in written form in various modern 'target' languages, and therefore are recorded for posterity in official printed collections such as the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (*AAS*), the *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paulo* (*IGP*), or electronic archives, such as the Vatican web-site, 'www.vatican'.[11] John Paul II was an accomplished linguist, fluent or at least proficient (for the purposes of delivering a prepared paper) in several languages, including his native Polish, and Latin, Italian, French, English, Spanish, German and others. The *Acta* and *Insegnamenti* are important texts for scholarly analysis because they reproduce the text of a papal address in the language in which it was originally delivered.

Collectively these documents may be described as the 'Solemn Ordinary Magisterium' and other expressions of the 'Ordinary Magisterium'.

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[11] Many of these documents are also found in pamphlet form, such as those distributed by *The Catholic Truth Society*, London which use versions produced by *The Vatican Polyglot Press* or *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, Vatican City.

The Pope's ordinary teaching power

The classification of the various magisterial documents is important in understanding their relative authoritative weight as official Church teachings. Such a system of grading documents according to a set of criteria allows, indeed compels, the reader to exercise a certain amount of discernment and discretion with regard to the level of assent that is to be appropriately given to any particular text, in any particular context.

Under normal circumstances, and between ecumenical councils, Popes frequently exercise their teaching authority by means of their ordinary teaching power. [12] Differing levels of solemnity are attached to the teachings of an ecumenical council on one hand, and written and oral statements by a Pope on the other. An exercise of solemn teaching authority by a Pope in turn requires a different level of assent on the part of the faithful from an exercise of ordinary teaching authority. As Francis Sullivan observes, the Pope,

> [E]xercises his universal teaching office, without intending to make definitive pronouncements, in his encyclicals, apostolic letters and exhortations, and other documents addressed to the whole Catholic Church. He can also exercise his teaching office by his explicit approval of doctrinal statements which are promulgated for the whole church by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith ...[13]

Therefore as Sullivan goes on to make clear, 'one rightly distinguishes among many different levels of authority exercised by the "ordinary" Magisterium.' [14]

Those levels of magisterial teaching which carry a lesser level of solemnity require a lesser level of assent; though of course all papal teachings have an intrinsic authority by virtue of the fact that the one who proposes such teachings has a unique role, according to a Catholic understanding, as the supreme teacher of doctrine throughout the universal Church. In this sense the Second Vatican Council states that:

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[12] Sullivan, *Fidelity*, p. 2.
[13] Sullivan, *Fidelity*, pp. 19-20.
[14] Sullivan, *Fidelity*, p. 22.

> The religious assent of will and intellect is to be given in a special way to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman pontiff even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra* [i.e. infallibly]; in such a way, that is, that his supreme teaching authority is respectfully acknowledged, and sincere adherence given to decisions he has delivered, in accordance with his manifest mind and will which is communicated chiefly by the nature of the documents, by the frequent repetition of the same doctrine or by the style of verbal expression.[15]

The classification and interpretation of the texts produced by the Magisterium is therefore a functional specialization within the Catholic religious discourse. A further sub-category of such functional specialization would be the attempt to classify and interpret the teachings of the Church with regard to its understanding of the religious life of Muslims and Islam. This study is an attempt to discern the 'nature' of these documents, which essentially lie within the category of the ordinary Magisterium. The 'frequent repetition' of certain teachings is a feature of the various documents which have been produced, and styles of 'verbal expression' can certainly be identified.

The styles of verbal expression which have been applied have changed and developed during the long history of the Church. This was particularly noticeable and significant during the pontificate of John Paul II. The Catholic Church's magisterial expressions constitute a distinct documentary record of such changes and developments. The twofold purpose of this study is to chart this historical phenomenon at work in the magisterium of John Paul II, and to suggest a framework within which they may be 'read' and interpreted.

I wish to contend that while such material may not be always be *addressed* to the universal Church as such, it may well have a *universal significance* for the life of the whole Church.

Religiously significant teachings about Muslims and the religion of Islam

Much of the material concerning Islam and Muslims in the Church's documents is not considered 'doctrinal' in any definitive sense, but has an

[15] 'The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*', in Norman Tanner SJ, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Volume II*, Sheed and Ward, London, 1990, p. *869.

important religious significance in that the Church's understanding of the status of Islam, or the Church's judgement on the relationship between Christians and Muslims, is expressed in a certain manner, or within a particular context, which has profound implications for the way in which Christians regard Muslims and the religion of Islam. These statements may indicate for instance, which views, or kinds of behaviour, or uses of language and terminology when referring to Muslims and their religion, are more appropriate, or indicative of a Christian understanding and response, than others. These documents especially refer to those teachings in which Muslims and the religion of Islam are described or interpreted in certain ways.

Therefore apart from those teachings which are clearly either doctrinal or disciplinary, there are teaching statements which can be described more accurately as those which have a 'religious significance'. The realization that such material represents a third category is quite a recent development within the life of the Church. Generally speaking, the material found in any document is 'doctrinal' in nature if it expresses a position pertaining to matters of faith or questions of morality to be definitively held by the faithful. Teachings or opinions referring to Islam which concern matters with general 'religious significance', but which are not 'doctrinal'[16] in the strict and solemn sense of that word, are found in the texts of Vatican II in its 'dogmatic constitution', *Lumen Gentium*, and in one of its three 'declarations', *Nostra Aetate*.

The material which refers to Muslims found within *Lumen Gentium* article 16 is contained within the one of the most authoritative documents of the council, but not in a section which is usually regarded as making definitive statements concerned with faith and morals. Its teaching is nevertheless religiously significant. The other material referring to Muslims can be found in the 'Declaration on Non-Christian Religions', *Nostra Aetate*, article 3. Declarations, like 'decrees', are essentially exhortatory documents, but carry less authority than a council 'constitution'. Nevertheless, as a document produced by an ecumenical council *Nostra Aetate* has a higher status, or at least no lesser status, than the Apostolic Exhortations produced by an 'ordinary', 'special' or 'extraordinary' synod of bishops, or by a Pope exercising his ordinary teaching magisterium alone, for example, in an Encyclical or Apostolic Letter.[17]

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[16] Claudia Carlen, IHM, ed., *Papal Pronouncements: A Guide: 1740-1978, Volume I: Benedict XIV to Paul VI*, The Pierian Press, Michigan, 1990, p. xii.

[17] I much prefer to describe *Nostra Aetate* as 'exhortatory', rather than merely 'pastoral', see Fitzgerald, *Mission Outlook*, p. 4.

The Categories of Document which express the solemn teachings of the Magisterium

As I have already indicated, there exist many categories of 'texts' in the form of teaching documents, or oral communications based on written documents, which are utilized by the Magisterium. Sometimes these may express definitive or non-definitive statements.[18]

Decretal Letters (Litteras Decretales)

In the contemporary understanding this is a 'solemn document dealing with such matters as dogmatic definitions and the official proclamation of beatifications.'[19] The earlier sense of this word, as with many similar terms, is less precise. F G Morrisey, in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* states that such a document is 'generally presumed to invoke infallibility.'[20]

Apostolic Constitutions (Constitutio Apostolica)

This form of document is one which the Pope makes in his own name. Indeed, it 'may be the considered the most solemn type of document issued by the Pope in his own name'.[21] *Fidei Depositum*, the constitution whereby the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* was issued in 1992, by Pope John Paul II, is such a document. The content of the 'Apostolic Constitution' has, since the time of the Second Vatican Council, taken on 'a strong doctrinal component.'[22]

Encyclical Letters (Litterae Encyclicae)

Also known as 'encyclicals', these are perhaps the best known of all the types of teaching documents utilized by the Popes, especially in the modern

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[18] Sullivan, *Fidelity*, pp. 12-27.

[19] Carlen, *Pronouncements*, p. xii.

[20] Catholic University of America, *New Catholic Encyclopedia: Jubilee Volume—The Wojtyla Years*, Gale, Washington DC, 2001, p. 181.

[21] Carlen, *Pronouncements*, p. xii.

[22] F G Morrisey, 'Magisterial Documents', in Catholic University of America, *New Catholic Encyclopedia: Jubilee Volume—The Wojtyla Years*, Gale, Washington DC, 2001, p. 181.

period. From early times, possibly from the second century AD, such a form of letter existed, in a more elementary form, in that letters of a pastoral nature were circulated (hence 'encyclical' from the Greek *en*—'in', and *kyklos*—'a circle').[23] Those produced and issued by the bishop of Rome were particularly significant to the Church, both in the East and in the West. Morrisey's succinct definition of this category of document, as it exists today, states that:

> An encyclical is a pastoral letter written by the Pope for the entire Church. Encyclicals are used to present the moral and social teachings of the Church, or to give counsel on points of doctrine which must be made more precise or which must be taught in view of specific circumstances.[24]

Redemptor Hominis, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* and *Redemptoris Missio* are some examples of encyclicals I will refer to later in the discussion concerning Christian-Muslim relations. Thus, 'Encyclical Epistle' (*epistolae encyclicae*), refers to a form of encyclical-type document, which is limited to an address to one section of the Church, and which refers to a more particular issue or need.[25] It is crucial to remember however that even though a document is not addressed to the universal Church, it may come to have a universal significance which the Church may find it to hard to control; for although the level of a document's authority may be clearly recognized within the Church itself, it may, solely as a document produced by the Magisterium of the Church, take on a significance beyond its intended purpose.

Apostolic Letters (Litterae Apostolicae)

These letters are issued on the basis of the Pope's own discretion. The Apostolic Letter is of lesser significance than the Apostolic Constitution which deals with more solemn or weightier matters. Apostolic Letters

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[23] Anne Fremantle, 'What is an Encyclical?', in, Anne Fremantle, ed., *The Papal Encyclicals in their Historical Context: The Teachings of the Popes from Peter to John XXIII*, Mentor-Omega, New York, 1963, p. 21.

[24] Morrisey, *The Wojtyla Years* p. 181.

[25] See Fremantle's discussion in 'What is an Encyclical?', in Fremantle, ed., *Teachings*, pp. 21-29.

deal with canonical matters of a legislative nature, in which case they are usually given the title Apostolic Letters (*Litterae Apostolicae*) '*Motu Proprio*'. In the case of some Apostolic Letters the content is of an interpretative nature. This emphasis appears to have emerged during the papacy of John Paul II. In such a case the Apostolic Letter is not referred to with the suffix '*motu proprio*'. *Redemptionis Anno* and *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* are documents issued in this category.

Apostolic Exhortations (Adhortatio Apostolica) *or Exhortations* (Adhortatio/Hortatio)

Such a document is not legislative, rather it *exhorts* its recipients to a particular form of life or action and urges their co-operation in a particular matter. It has been noted that this form of document was used by John Paul II on a regular basis, but for rather specific issues. The deliberations and recommendations of the synods of bishops, united with the Pope, which meet at regular intervals, have tended to be issued in the form of Apostolic Exhortations. This can be the case with the 'ordinary', 'special' or 'extraordinary' synods, whether plenary or when the bishops of a particular region meet. The documents *Ecclesia in Africa*, *Ecclesia in Europa*, *Ecclesia in Asia*, and *Ecclesia in Oceania* are examples of such teaching documents.[26]

Less Solemn Documents Issued by the Pope
Simple Letters

'Simple Letters' *(Epistolae)* are documents that address a particular person or persons, or a specific situation or event in the life of the Church, such as a personal or national jubilee.[27] These can be distinguished from 'Autograph Letters' (*Chirographa*) that are usually sent from the Pope to a cardinal of the Church 'with an informal statement of views on some important matter', however heads of state and other such dignitaries may also receive these in certain circumstances to be judged by the Pope or the Holy See.[28]

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[26] Morrisey, *The Wojtyla Years*, p. 181.
[27] Carlen, *Pronouncements*, p. xiii.
[28] Carlen, *Pronouncements*, p. xiii.

Allocutions (Allocutiones)

The English word 'allocution' comes from the Latin '*allocutio*'—'to speak to'. The word can therefore be defined as a 'formal or hortatory speech or manner of address.'[29] Apart from the written forms of communication issued by the Magisterium allocutions express the current opinion of the Magisterium on a particular issue or issues to large audiences in a much more immediate and accessible way. It is in this latter sense that the term now primarily applies.

Often these speeches reiterate a position which is already taught by the Church and which ought to be held by the faithful, for instance, those which are in keeping with the teaching of Vatican II, or other authoritative sources such as encyclicals etc. But, more significantly, sometimes these 'allocutions' serve to subtly advance the sense in which a given teaching is to be understood, particularly when related to or applied to the nuances of a given situation or context. In this sense these papal speeches, among the various issues which the Pope addresses, can be 'interventions of the [ordinary] Pontifical Magisterium with regard to interreligious dialogue'.[30] Such allocutions, particularly but not exclusively, follow the principles laid down by Vatican II. The Council explains that 'sincere adherence' is to be given to 'decisions he [the Pope] has delivered, in accordance with his manifest mind and will which is communicated ... by the frequent repetition of the same doctrine or by the style of verbal expression' which is used to convey a given teaching.[31]

In this study I wish to give emphasis to the way in which John Paul II used the 'allocution genre' to advance the task of teaching the faith, especially as understood by Vatican II. I will also show how he used this method of 'repetition' and styles of 'verbal expression' in order to give a clearer sense of the 'theological motivations of interreligious dialogue as explained by the Magisterium';[32] but in a more focused sense, how he attempted to offer a clearer accumulative verbal and documentary description of Muslims and the religion of Islam during his pontificate.

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[29] *Concise Oxford English Dictionary.*

[30] Cardinal Francis Arinze in Francesco Gioia, (ed.), *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church (1963-1995)*, Pauline Books and Media, Boston, 1997, p. xxvii.

[31] '*Lumen Gentium*', art.25, in Tanner, *Decrees: Volume II*, p. *869.

[32] Arinze in Gioia, *Interreligious Dialogue*, p. xxvii.

Following on from Paul VI's example, John Paul II, in his individuality, utilized this medium in a way never before seen, in that it became a perfect medium with which to reach the audiences he encountered in his travels around the world, bringing Church teaching to large 'live' audiences which were representative of the regional, but also the global, interests of humanity. It is also significant that the modern media communications network is at the service of such messages. John Paul II also became, reputedly, the most photographed and televised pontiff in history.[33]

The way in which TV coverage has also been utilized by the Church, especially since the 1960s, with its culmination in the work of such channels as EWTN which is given over solely to coverage of Catholic issues, especially the coverage of the papal visits of Pope John Paul II, and his allocutions during such journeys around the world, is a demonstration of the effectiveness of such a medium. Often John Paul II's allocutions were combined with powerful symbolic gestures of reconciliation and fellowship towards those with whom he met.

The other major development during the pontificate of John Paul II was the creation of the official web-site of the Holy See, which now gives one instant access to thousands of papal documents available on the internet. These serve as a powerful means of reaching billions of people worldwide.

Allocutions are not 'legislative by nature', they nevertheless offer a 'particular insight into the personal thought of the Pope' with regard to the matter to which he gives his attention.[34]

The way in which the allocutionary tradition has evolved in the Modern period demonstrates that every historical period requires innovative developments and that every Pope's style is 'personal' to the individual who exercises such a ministry.[35]

Lumen Gentium article 16, Second Vatican Council, 21-11-1964

The first unequivocally positive appreciation of the Muslims in the teaching of an Ecumenical Council of the Church appeared in the final

[33] Reuters News Agency, *Pope John Paul II: Reaching Out Across Borders*, Reuters-Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 2003. See also George Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, p. 4.

[34] Morrisey, in *The Wojtyla Years*, p. 181.

[35] Carlen, *Pronouncements*, p. xiv.

draft of the text of *Lumen Gentium*, the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. In it we read:

Latin Text of *Lumen Gentium* art. 16 pertaining to Muslims (Authorized Latin Version from Second Vatican Council 21/ 11/ 1964):[36]	English Translation of *Lumen Gentium* art. 16 (Walter Abbott's English Edition 1967).[37]
Sed propositum salutis et eos amplectitur, qui creatorem agnoscunt, inter quos imprimis Musulmanos, qui fidem Abrahae se tenere profitentes, nobiscum Deum adorant unicum, misericordem, homines die novissimo iudicaturum.	But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place among these there are the Moslems [Muslims], who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge [hu]mankind.

Commentary

What is most notable in the text is the acknowledgement that, among the world religions, Islam is pre-eminent, after Christianity and Judaism, in virtue of its monotheism, and in its reference to Abraham. God's 'plan of salvation' itself embraces them. From the theological point of view this is a profound assertion, because it clearly implies that Muslims are incorporated, albeit in a mysterious and providential way, within the divine economy. The sense of this document is that, while the fullness of the Judeo-Christian revelation is not present in Islam, nevertheless there is a link of some kind, although the Council does not specify what the nature of the link is.

From a Catholic theological perspective, the single most important aspect of this small section of *Lumen Gentium* 16 is the recognition and confirmation that both religions worship the one true God.[38] On the

[36] Original Latin Text in Norman Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils Volume II: Trent—Vatican II*, Sheed and Ward, London, 1990, p. 861.

[37] English Translation in Walter Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1967, p. 35.

[38] See the similar reference in *Nostra Aetate 3*: 'qui unicum Deum adorant' and 'Deum maxime in oratione, eleemosynis et ieiunio colunt'.

other hand, in the texts of Vatican II, 'God' and 'Creator' are used only in a generic sense, without reference to other theological categories specific to Islam on one hand, and Christianity on the other. Confession-specific appellations such as 'the Father', 'Trinity' or 'Allah' are avoided in these particular sections of *Lumen Gentium* and *Nostra Aetate*, and in many subsequent post-conciliar texts.

In his commentary on the Vatican II texts, Robert Caspar, one of the experts who was responsible for the drafting of the Council statements on Muslims and Islam, provides many helpful insights into why the texts appear in their final form. Caspar concludes that, according to the teaching of the Council: 'We [Catholics] cannot ever say again that we do not adore the same God, even if we call Him by different names'.[39] Such an assertion is not without its hermeneutical complexities. This assertion needs to be carefully clarified in order that the faithful understand it properly. However, we can certainly say of Caspar's theological opinion, that, on this issue, it seems to be in line with the official interpretation of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. It is significant that just prior to his papal election John Paul II focused on the theological significance of the expression '*together with us* (they adore the one merciful God)' ('nobiscum Deum adorant unicum'). In his commentary on the Council, he seems to suggest that this expression 'seems not only to denote the fact that we are all monotheists', a teaching already explicitly established in the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suum* 6/8/64, 'but also to imply that we have something in common where Revelation is concerned'.[40]

It is significant that the terminology used to describe the Muslims underwent an important development during the Council. Many terms used to describe the Muslims during the history of the Church's relationship with Islam have been derogatory or, according to Muslim self understanding, descriptively inaccurate. The Fathers of the Council used the Latin term '*Musulmanos*' which is the Persian form of the Arabic '*Muslim*'. '*Musulmanos*' is generally translated 'Muslim' in English. The term most commonly used by Christians in the preceding four centuries had been 'Mohammedan'/ 'Mohammedans'. This is regarded as an offensive

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[39] Robert Caspar MAfr., 'Islam According to Vatican II: On the Tenth Anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*', *Encounter*, No. 21, January, 1976, p. 3.

[40] Karol Wojtyla, *Sources of Renewal: The Implementation of the Second Vatican Council*, trans., P S Falls, Collins, London, 1980, p. 129. For a further discussion of these issues see Maurice Borrmans, 'Islam and Christianity: Common Doctrinal Basis and Areas of Convergence', *Encounter, 23*, March 1976, pp. 1-15.

term from the Islamic point of view. 'Muslim/ Muslims' has now been accepted as the most accurate and sensitive terminology to use. In Latin this is rendered in the Persian derived *'Musulmanos'*, or in the direct Latin transliteration of the Arabic, '*Muslimos*'. As we shall see, the official Latin text of *Nostra Aetate* uses the latter.[41]

Nostra Aetate, Second Vatican Council, 28-10-65.

The themes of the common 'Monotheistic' and 'Abrahamic' faith of Christianity and Islam are reiterated in the more extensive text of *Nostra Aetate.*

Latin Text of *Nostra Aetate* art. 3 pertaining to Muslims (Authorized Latin Version from Second Vatican Council 28/ 10/ 1965):[42]

Ecclesia cum aestimatione quoque muslimos respicit qui unicum Deum adorant, viventem et subsistentem, misericordem et omnipotentem, creatorem caeli et terrae, homines allocutum, cuius occultis etiam decretis toto animo se submittere student, sicut Deo se submisit Abraham ad quem fides islamica libenter sese refert. Iesum, quem quidem ut Deum non agnoscunt, ut prophetam tamen venerantur, matremque eius virginalem honorant Mariam et aliquando eam

English Translation of *Nostra Aetate* art. 3
(Thomas Stransky's translation in Walter Abbott's English Edition 1967).[43]

Upon the Moslems [Muslims], too, the Church looks with esteem. They adore one God, living and enduring, merciful and all-powerful, Maker of heaven and earth and Speaker to men [humanity]. They strive to submit wholeheartedly even to His inscrutable decrees, just as did Abraham, with whom the Islamic faith [or 'the faith of Islam'] is pleased to associate itself. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet.

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[41] Robert Caspar, 'La Religion Musulmane', in A M Henry, ed., *Vatican II, Textes et commentaries, Les relations de l'Eglise avec les religions non chrétiennes: Declaration "Nostra aetate", Unam Sanctam 61*, Les Editions Du Cerf, Paris, 1966, p. 207.

[42] Original Latin in Norman Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils Volume II: Trent—Vatican II*, Sheed and Ward, London, 1990, p. 969.

[43] English Translation by Tom Stransky, in Walter Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1967, p. 663. My additions are in square parentheses.

devote etiam invocant. Diem insuper iudicii expectant cum Deus omnes homines resuscitatos remunerabit. Exinde vitam moralem aestimant et Deum maxime in oratione, eleemosynis et ieiunio colunt.

Quodsi in decursu saeculorum inter christianos et muslimos non paucae dissensiones et inimicitiae exortae sint, sacrosancta synodus omnes exhortatur, ut praeterita obliviscentes, se ad comprehensionem mutuam sincere exerceant et pro omnibus hominibus iustitiam socialem, bona moralia necnon pacem et libertatem communiter tueantur et promoveant.

They also honor Mary, His virgin mother; at times they call on her, too, with devotion. In addition they await the day of judgement when God will give each man his due after raising him up. Consequently, they prize the moral life, and give worship to God especially through prayer, almsgiving, and fasting.

Although in the course of the centuries many quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems [Muslims], this most sacred Synod urges all to forget the past and to strive sincerely for mutual understanding. On behalf of all mankind, let them make common cause of safeguarding and fostering social justice, moral values, peace, and freedom.

Commentary

The first paragraph of *Nostra Aetate* 3 is a concise appreciation of certain aspects of the 'Islamic faith' from a Catholic perspective, but which is nevertheless sensitive to the Muslim position. Each reference is carefully chosen and finely honed, and yet there are obvious and significant omissions; namely, *explicit* reference to the Qur'an, to Muhammad and to the Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca).

The text is nevertheless sensitive to 'Qur'anic criteria'. The authors made a conscious attempt to construct the text of *Nostra Aetate* using phrases which were intended to convey a Muslim understanding of God's attributes. The phrases reflect very careful choices, and display important nuances which would resonate with Muslim sensibilities.[44]

[44] Robert Caspar's and Emilio Platti's insights on this section of the text are invaluable. Caspar, *Encounter, 21*, pp. 1-7. See Ovey N. Muhammed's brief comments in *Muslim-Christian Relations: Past-Present-Future*, Orbis, New York, 1999 which reiterate some of these observations, p. 60; also Emilio Platti OP in, 'Islam: Dialogue or Confrontation?', (Manila: Centre for Contextualized Theology and Ethics, 2003), [http://www.cteust.com/article2.htm.], pp. 4-7.

The references to 'Abraham', 'Jesus' (Arabic '*Isa*) and 'Mary' (Arabic *Maryam*) in the text of *Nostra Aetate* describe the Qur'anic perspective and attempt to evoke a sense of continuity between some aspects of the Christian faith, and those of the Muslim faith, whilst at the same time honestly acknowledging the important differences between them.[45] Both Jesus and Mary are important figures in the Qur'an and much of the material relating to them can be found in the 19th sura *Maryam*.

Nostra Aetate 3 concludes with a reference to the fact that both Christianity and Islam have similar beliefs about the general resurrection and the judgement of the dead, and that they share some moral and religious values in common, such as prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

In the second paragraph of *Nostra Aetate* 3 both Christians and Muslims are asked to move beyond past enmity, in order to overcome it. Both 'mutual understanding' and the promotion of 'moral values' and all types of 'social justice', 'peace', and 'freedom' are possible because of the many concerns which Christians and Muslims, in principle, ought to share.

I have sought to indicate what we may call the 'silences' in the text, i.e. the absence of *explicit* references to the Qur'an, to Muhammad and to the Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) are very obvious. In some instances, however, the brevity of the texts was due to the 'very narrow limits' imposed on the various commissions responsible for the drafting of the documents—for instance, practical considerations such as space, 'did not permit the smallest explanation' by *periti*.[46] More significantly, material was left out which it was thought would obfuscate and/or jeopardise the encounter they sought to initiate with overly complex theological issues; and so if the Council had given 'prominence to serious weaknesses', Anawati argues, 'the two sides might then no longer have any desire for this dialogue'.[47]

Anawati contends that *Nostra Aetate* 'gives an account, in the shortest possible form, of the Moslem *theodicy*, but not of the *essence* of the Moslem faith.' This distinction is not immediately clear. What I think he wishes to say is that what the declaration *does* say is 'a fact of the first

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[45] Although the discussion of the title 'seal of the prophets' is neglected.

[46] George Anawati, 'Excursus on Islam', (trans.), Simon and Erika Young, in Herbert Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II: Volume III*, Herder and Herder/Burns and Oates, New York/London, 1968, p. 152.

[47] Anawati, *Documents of Vatican II*, p. 153.

importance' in terms of the Christian-Muslim encounter.[48] Nevertheless to omit to mention Muhammad was such a serious and 'sensitive' issue that 'this central point will have to be considered in more detail.' While the *periti* and prelates at the Council had 'chosen to deal with it—by ignoring it', the outstanding question of the status of Muhammad, and of the 'Qur'anic revelation' viewed from a Catholic perspective, were, and continue to be, important questions for the theological agenda in the Catholic Church in the post-conciliar period.[49]

This conciliar declaration therefore presented a blue-print for dialogue at various levels, whether at the level of the so-called 'dialogue of life', 'dialogue of action', 'dialogue of religious experience' or 'dialogue of [theological] discourse'. [50] I would like to suggest that the various, so-called 'theological' or 'religious' issues, whilst important in the post-conciliar period, are not more important than pragmatic considerations related to situations where religious freedom, the rights of the person, the rights of religious minorities and conflict resolution through religious exchange, are at stake. In the context of the contemporary global encounter between Muslims and Christians diplomatic exchange is as significant as 'theological' dialogue, when understood as an instrument which facilitates pastoral care and ministry.

Pope John Paul II (1978-2005)

The Muslim scholar Ataullah Siddiqui, has claimed that, none of the documents of Vatican II 'refers explicitly to Islam.'[51] Siddiqui has recently argued that whilst *Nostra Aetate* is 'a major step forward' in the Catholic Church's understanding of the Muslim faith; nevertheless Muslims lament its omissions, however, Siddiqui claims that the document 'avoided using the name of "Islam", so crucial for Muslims.'[52]

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[48] Anawati, *Documents of Vatican II*, p. 153.

[49] Anawati, *Documents of Vatican II*, p. 154.

[50] Cardinal Francis Arinze, *Meeting Other Believers*, Gracewing, Herefordshire, 1997, pp. 5-7.

[51] Ataullah Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century*, Palgrave/Macmillan, Hampshire, 1997, p. 34.

[52] Ataullah Siddiqui, 'Islam and Christian Theology', in David F. Ford and Rachel Muers, eds., *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology Since 1918*, Blackwell, Oxford, 3rd Edition, 2005, p. 675.

In making these criticisms, Siddiqui fails to recognise that a reference to 'Islam' is certainly not absent from *Nostra Aetate*. Siddiqui demonstrates that he is not familiar with the original official Latin text,[53] nor with various other pronouncements about Islam found in the corpus of official Church documents. He appears not to recognise the full significance of some important clarifications in Catholic teachings, be they oral or documentary, which the Church has made *since* the Council. The lack of adequate knowledge of the text of *Nostra Aetate* seems to be caused primarily by Siddiqui's sole use of Austin Flannery's English Edition of the documents of Vatican II as a primary source. As I will show, Flannery's edition offers an incorrect translation of the third paragraph of *Nostra Aetate*.

The fact that the official Latin does indeed contain a reference to 'Islam' is evidenced in, possibly, the most reliable English translation of the original text; the translation in Walter Abbott's 1967 edition, where the Latin '*fides islamica*' is rendered 'Islamic faith'. The original translator of this text into English, Fr Thomas Stransky, an expert who was intimately involved in the process of compiling the final text of *Nostra Aetate* at the Council, in a revised translation of the text of *Nostra Aetate*, now renders '*fides islamica*' as the 'faith of Islam'. Whilst both translations are equally valid, it is significant that Stransky now believes, after consideration, that the latter is more correct.

Redemptor Hominis, Encyclical, 4-3-1979

Mahmut Aydin, a Muslim academic based in Turkey, advances a similar critique to that of Siddiqui when he argues that,

> [T]he Catholic Church has urged her followers to respect and esteem Muslims by mentioning the common points between Christians and Muslims. While doing this, her authorities have deliberately chosen to be silent on those issues which make the religion of Muslims, Islam, a separate religion apart from the Judeo-Christian tradition'. [54]

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[53] Norman Tanner SJ, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils Volume II: Trent-Vatican II*, Sheed and Ward, London, 1990.

[54] Mahmut Aydin, 'Towards a Theological Dialogue Between Christians and Muslims', *Islamochristiana, 26*, 2000, p. 5.

Aydin continues,

> Here, I would like to clarify that Christians both Catholic and non-Catholics have been using 'Muslim' not 'Islam' in their documents to express their relationship with Muslims. Because they take into consideration Muslims as individuals independent from their religion. For example, in the most important document ... *Nostra Aetate*, Muslims were considered and praised as individuals without mentioning their religion, Islam ... 'Muslims' not 'Islam' ... are taken into account by Christians in the process of dialogue.[55]

In reply to Siddiqui and Aydin, a brief analysis of Pope John Paul II's first Encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*, demonstrates the need to be aware of clarifications and developments since *Nostra Aetate*. I include a section of the Latin text and my own English translation.

Redemptor Hominis: Original Latin text.	English translation.
... atque se existimare ostendit illos, qui Islamicam religionem sequuntur quorumque fides etiam ad Abraham refertur.	[The Council] also expressed its esteem for the followers of the religion of Islam, indeed whose faith looks to Abraham.[56]

The manner in which this encyclical uses language provides further evidence of the nuanced way in which the Catholic Church clarifies and develops its teaching. The Latin text here gives explicit recognition to the '*religion of Islam*' ('Islamicam religionem'), rather than solely to the 'faith of Islam' ('*fides islamica*').

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[55] Aydin, *Islamochristiana*, *26*, n.5, p. 2.

[56] My own translation from the original Latin in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1979, p. 277. Sadly the 'standard' English translation of this text is inaccurate in parts. This is produced in most pamphlets, and in Claudia Carlen's invaluable collection of the encyclicals in English, *The Papal Encyclicals* Pierian Press, Michigan, 1990. The standard translation, from the *Vatican Polyglot Press* version, reads: 'It also expressed its esteem for the believers of Islam, whose faith also looks to Abraham', p. 31. My thanks to Revd Laurence Paul Hemming of Heythrop College, University of London, and to Revd Francis Selman of Allen Hall Seminary, London, for their advice and assistance in the preparation of these translations, and for their helpful criticism and suggestions. Any responsibility for errors or deficiencies in this and the following translations is of course my own.

Siddiqui and others have criticized the fact that *Nostra Aetate* fails to mention the Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca, the Hajj.[57] It has been suggested that *Nostra Aetate* at the time omitted a reference to the Hajj because it was felt to be 'too intimately connected with the person of Muhammad.'[58] This omission has in part been rectified during the pontificate of John Paul II.

During his historic visit to the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem on 26 March 2000, in the presence of the Grand Mufti, John Paul II acknowledged the role of pilgrimage in Christianity and Islam. He stated that:

> Pilgrimage to holy places is a feature common to many religious traditions, especially to the three Abrahamic religions. I thank God, revered by Jews, Christians and Muslims. Jerusalem is the Holy City par excellence. It forms part of the common patrimony of *our religions* and of the whole of humanity. [59]

Explicit references to the Hajj are found in the PCID's *Guidelines*:

> The annual participation of a multitude of pilgrims, ever growing larger, in the ceremonies of pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca is both a marvellous symbol and a tangible sign of the unity which brings Muslim men and women together ... On pilgrimage Muslims transcend their ethnic, linguistic, economic and political diversity, because there 'believers are naught else but brothers,' as the Qur'an itself affirms (49:10).[60]

It later explains something of the faith-significance of Hajj for Muslim pilgrims:

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[57] Siddiqui, *Modern Theologians*, p. 675. Note that he says that *Nostra Aetate* also omits a reference to 'fasting', a claim which is clearly inaccurate.

[58] Michael L Fitzgerald, "'Dialogue and Proclamation": A Reading in the Perspective of Christian-Muslim Relations', in *In Many and Diverse Ways: In Honor of Jacques Dupuis*, Daniel Kendall and Gerald O'Collins, eds., Orbis, New York, 2003, p. 183.

[59] *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paulo II*, 23, 1, 2001, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, pp. 855-858.

[60] PCID, *Guidelines*, p. 19.

> The pilgrimage to Mecca takes them back to the sources of their faith and history, gives supranational dimensions to their religious experience, and, especially, prepares them for and leads them to the grace of contrition and forgiveness, through the various stages of a conversion to God. [61]

However, the most solemn reference to the importance of pilgrimage to date can be found in *Redemptionis Anno*:

Redemptionis Anno: Original Latin text.	English translation.
Etiam Muslimi <<sanctam>> vocant Ierusalem,acri cum amore,qui ab origine macometanae doctrinae repetitur et ex hoc gignitur, quod multa illic habent peculiaria loca sacris peregrinationibus destinata, et plus iam mille anni intercesserunt, ex quo fere continenter ibidem habitant.	Muslims also call Jerusalem 'Holy', with a fervent love, which, has been repeated since the origin of Muhammadan doctrine, and, in fact, has grown, because they have there many particular places which are the destination for their sacred pilgrimages, and for more than a thousand years have prayed there, and from the fact that they have almost continuously dwelt there, in that manner.[62]

While this is not an explicit reference to the Hajj, rather it concentrates on the significance for Muslims of Jerusalem, the document nonetheless speaks favourably and with great respect for the 'sacred pilgrimages' of the Muslims. This plural form could be an implication that Hajj is also to be included in this reference. Given the view of the *Guidelines* there seems no good reason to deny this interpretation of *Redemptionis Anno*.

Redemptionis Anno is the only post-conciliar text which I have encountered that goes back to the use of the term 'Muhammadan' in the Latin text, as in its reference to 'Muhammadan doctrine' ('*macometanae doctrinae*'). I have no explanation for this textual anomaly.

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[61] PCID, *Guidelines*, p. 62.

[62] My own translation from the Latin Text in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1984, p. 626.

The standard English translation of this text, although it lacks a good deal of accuracy in many respects, has one positive aspect, in that the unfortunate 'oversight' in the official Latin text is avoided:

> Muslims also call Jerusalem 'Holy', with a profound attachment that goes back to the origins of Islam and springs from the fact that they have there many special places of pilgrimage, and for more than a thousand years have dwelt there, almost without interruption.[63]

Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, Encyclical, 30-12-1987

Sollicitudo Rei Socialis: Original Latin text.	English translation.
Hoc rogatu eos etiam compellamus, qui hereditatem Abrahae, "patris fidei", ac traditionem Veteris Testamenti nobiscum communicant, eos qui, ut nos, in Deum iustum et misericordem credunt, id est ad Iudaeos et Musulmanos. Rogatum hunc etiam ad omnes sectatores *magnarum mundi religionum* amplius perferimus.	In the same way I also address this proposal to those who share the inheritance of Abraham, "our father in faith", and the tradition of the Old Testament and who, with us, believe in the just and merciful God, that is to the Jews and Muslims. I also extend this proposal to all followers of the world's great religions.[64]

In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* 'the Muslims' are described as followers of one of the 'world's great religions'. This is a novel characterization of Islam by the solemn Magisterium, and a further significant clarification of the status of Islam, according to an official Catholic understanding. [65]

It is arguable that this text is also highly significant in the sense that it seems to suggest that not only the Jews, but also the Muslims, share

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[63] Francesco Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church (1963-1995)*, Pauline Books and Media, Boston, English Edition, 1997, p. 93.

[64] My own translation from the Latin Text in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1988, p. 582. Compare with the standard published translation: 'I likewise address this appeal to the Jewish people, who share with us the inheritance of Abraham, "our father in faith" and the tradition of the Old Testament, as well as to the Muslims who, like us believe in the just and merciful God. And I extend it to all followers of the world's great religions.' Gioia, *Interreligious*, p. 99.

[65] Gioia, *Interreligious*, p. 99.

the tradition of the Old Testament. This assertion is not well developed, but, I would suggest that it may expand upon the second of Pope John Paul's insights into the texts of Vatican II in *Sources of Renewal*.

Commenting on *Lumen Gentium* 16 John Paul II had asserted that 'not only ... are [we] all monotheists, but ... we have something in common where Revelation is concerned.'[66] That Islam and Christianity share a common monotheism demonstrates that the issue of Islamic monotheism cannot be treated in isolation from other aspects of the Judeo-Christian revelation; this is the reason why Abraham, viewed by both Christians and Muslims as the original messenger of the one true God, has been such an important figure within the Catholic-Muslim encounter.

Within the material relating to the Islamic faith found in the documents of Vatican II, Abraham is mentioned twice, once in *Lumen Gentium*, and once in *Nostra Aetate*. Apart from Jesus and Mary he is the only figure to be explicitly mentioned by name in these sections. This is certainly unusual, given the brevity of the texts. This decision has become highly significant in the post-conciliar treatment of Islam.

However, some Catholic scholars, such as Ovey Muhammed and Thomas Michel, have been critical of the way in which they think both *Lumen Gentium* and *Nostra Aetate* employ 'restrictive'[67] and 'ambiguous'[68] interpretations of the Abrahamic nature of Muslim faith. They argue that *Lumen Gentium*'s claim that Muslims' 'professing to hold the faith of Abraham', can appear to give the impression that 'although Muslims consider themselves in the line of faith of Abraham, in fact we as Christians do not consider them as such.'[69] If his reading of *Lumen Gentium*, and my interpretation of *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* are accurate, then Pope John Paul II, to some extent, has clarified this ambiguity.

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[66] Karol Wojtyla, *Sources of Renewal*, p. 129.

[67] Thomas Michel cited in Muhammed, *Muslim-Christian Relations*, n. 46, p. 60. See also the discussion in Christian W Troll, 'Changing Catholic Views of Islam', in Waardenburg, Jacques, ed., *Islam and Christianity: Mutual Perceptions Since the Mid-20th Century*, Peeters, Leuven, 1998, pp. 19-77; Christian W. Troll, 'Catholic Teachings on Interreligious Dialogue: Analysis of Some Recent Official Documents, With Special Reference to Christian-Muslim Relations', in Waardenburg, Jacques, ed., *Muslim-Christian Perceptions of Dialogue Today: Experiences and Expectations*, Peeters, Leuven, 2000, pp. 234-275.

[68] Muhammed, *Muslim-Christian Relations*, p. 60.

[69] Thomas Michel cited in Muhammed, *Muslim-Christian Relations*, p. 60, n. 46. [My emphasis]

Furthermore in his address to Christians and Muslims in Ankara, on 3 December 1979, Pope John Paul II said: 'They [the Muslims] have, *like you*, the faith of Abraham in the one, almighty, and merciful God';[70] and in Lisbon, 14 May 1982, that, 'Abraham, *our common* forefather, teaches all—Christians, Jews and Muslims—to follow the path of mercy and love.'[71] At Casablanca, 19 August 1985, he told his Muslim audience that, '*For us*, Abraham is a very model of faith in God, of submission to his will and of confidence in his goodness.'[72] The wording of these speeches does seem much less ambiguous, indeed the Ankara and Casablanca speeches are emphatic in their evaluation of Muslim faith as both genuinely monotheistic and Abrahamic. Finally, during his historic visit to the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem on 26 March 2000, in the presence of the Grand Mufti, John Paul II acknowledged the role of Abraham, 'who for all believers is a model of faith and submission to Almighty God.'

As we have seen above, in a reference to the role of pilgrimage in Christianity and Islam the Pope referred to Judaism, Christianity and Islam as 'Abrahamic religions'. This is an example of the use of the language of what I refer to as 'creedal fellowship'. Through an application of the language of creedal fellowship, rather than of (third person) description, the alleged hesitancy of Vatican II appears to have disappeared altogether.

However some scholars advise caution. Muslims and Christians should be careful to 'avoid any confusion or syncretism', because as Casper notes, Abraham also 'means something different to each.'[73] We are reminded of the need to avoid unwarranted irenicism. As Caspar concludes:

> In the Koran Abraham's principle role is to foretell the coming of Muhammad and of Islam. In the Bible as read in the light of the Gospel, Abraham prepared for and announced Christ because he is the father of the people which has borne the promise and given birth to Christ according to the flesh.[74]

Catholic Christians and Muslims perhaps do accept Abraham as the type of their faith in the one true God, but beyond this they deploy

[70] Gioia, *Interreligious*, p. 220. [My emphasis]

[71] Gioia, *Interreligious*, p. 257. [My emphasis]

[72] John Paul II, 'To the Young Muslims of Morocco', August 19 1995, in Gioia, ed., *Interreligious*, p. 297. [My emphasis]. These quotations referring to Abraham, along with a commentary on their significance, can be found in Muhammed, *Muslim-Christian Relations*, p. 60-61.

[73] Robert Caspar, 'The Figure of Abraham: Abraham in Islam and Christianity', *Encounter, 92*, Feb. 1983, p. 16.

[74] Robert Caspar, 'The Figure of Abraham', p. 15.

Abraham in quite different and distinct ways. In the words of Fitzgerald, 'The person is the same, but the perspective has changed.'[75] This principle similarity constitutes what Caspar calls a 'parallel' understanding, the latter, involves the substitution of one meaning for another. [76]

Redemptoris Missio, Encyclical, 7-12-1990 and *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, Apostolic Letter, 10-11-1994

Redemptoris Missio and *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* can be interpreted as a key-change in the solemn magisterium of John Paul II. As the excerpts below indicate, the two documents demonstrate a concern to reiterate the essential teaching of *Nostra Aetate*. But at the same time these documents reaffirm the Church's missionary mandate, and the unique salvific action of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ. *Redemptoris Missio* and *Tertio*

Redemptoris Missio: Original Latin text.

Ad Asiae nuper Episcopos scripsimus: <Quantumvis libenter agnoscat Ecclesia quidquid veri sacrique in religiosis Buddismi et Induismi et Islamismi traditionibus invenitur—reditas nempe imagines illius veritatis omnes quae homines illustrat—non hinc tamen officium ipsius minuitur nec firmum propositum praedicandi sine dubitatione Iesum Christum quae 'via veritas et vita' est ...>

English translation.

I recently wrote to the Bishops of Asia: "No matter how much the Church freely acknowledges the extent to which there is truth and holiness in the religious traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam—as a reflection of that truth which enlightens all humanity—this does not lessen her duty and firm resolve to preach, without hesitation, Jesus Christ, who is 'the Way, the Truth and the Life ...'[77]

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[75] Michael Fitzgerald, 'Islam and Christianity—Convergence and Divergence', *Encounter*, 7, Aug.-Sept. 1974, p. 5.

[76] Robert Caspar, 'The Figure of Abraham', p. 17.

[77] My own translation from the Latin Text in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1991, p. 303ff. Compare with the standard translation: 'I recently wrote to the bishops of Asia: "Although the Church gladly acknowledges whatever is true and holy in the religious traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam as a reflection of that truth which enlightens all men, this does not lessen her duty and resolve to proclaim without fail Jesus Christ who is 'the way, and the truth and the life...', Gioia, *Interreligious*, p. 102.

Millennio Adveniente are both careful to warn those involved in dialogue against 'false irenicism.'

Tertio Millennio Adveniente

> 'Recalling that Christ ... by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and his love, fully reveals to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear,' two commitments should characterize in a special way the third preparatory year: [embracing] the challenge of secularism and dialogue with the [other] great religions ...With regard to the former, it will be fitting to broach the vast subject of the crisis of civilization, which has become apparent especially in the west[ern nations], which [are] highly developed from the standpoint of technology, but [are] interiorly impoverished by [their] tendency to forget God or to keep him at a distance. This crisis of civilization must be countered by the civilization of love, founded on the universal values of peace, solidarity, justice and liberty, which find their full attainment in Christ ... On the other hand, as far as the field of religious awareness is concerned, the eve of the year 2000 will provide a great opportunity, especially in view of the events of recent decades, for interreligious dialogue, in accordance with the specific guidelines set down by the Second Vatican Council in its Declaration *Nostra Aetate* on the relationship of the Church to non-Christian religions ... In this dialogue the Jews and the Muslims ought to have a pre-eminent place. God grant that, as a confirmation of these intentions, it may also be possible to hold joint meetings in places of significance for [the great religions believing in the one God] ... In this regard, attention is being given to finding ways of arranging historic meetings in places of exceptional symbolic importance—like Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Mount Sinai—as a means of furthering dialogue with Jews and the [Muslims], and to arranging similar meetings elsewhere with the leaders of the great world religions. However, care will always have to be taken not to cause harmful misunderstandings, avoiding the risk of syncretism and of a facile and deceptive irenicism.[78]

[78] Gioia, *Interreligious*, p. 111. I have modified parts of the text where the standard English translation is insufficiently faithful to the original Latin. These changes are clearly indicated in square parentheses.

In a useful commentary on such issues in Christian-Muslim dialogue Michael Fitzgerald suggests that although Islam and Christianity belong essentially to the 'same cultural matrix'[79] and therefore the 'same conceptual world'[80], it is very important to maintain clarity and precision of thought within the process of dialogue. As the two texts make clear, Muslims and Catholics agree on certain broad issues, as much of the post-conciliar solemn magisterium has shown; but the issues can be complex, and the question of possible convergence and divergence between Christian and Muslim beliefs needs careful consideration. As Fitzgerald maintains, 'dialogue, to be successful, must be sincere. An over-hasty declaration of unity without taking into account diversity would be as disastrous as it would be dishonest.'[81] Catholic scholars seek to understand the inner dynamics of the issues at stake within Catholic-Muslim dialogue in order to truly comprehend the divergent and convergent aspects of the two faiths.

Tertio Millennio Adveniente, and many of the solemn magisterial documents from this time on, were concerned with preparing the Church for the great Jubilee year in 2000. *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* demonstrates the meticulous forward planning which preoccupied much of the remainder of John Paul's pontificate. As it describes elsewhere, a major dimension of the Jubilee was to be the convocation of 'continental Synods' to be held in the years approaching the Millennium in Africa, the Americas, Oceania, Asia and Europe, in order to prepare the various sections of the universal Church for a renewal of Christian commitment in the Jubilee year.[82] A second dimension was the plan to hold 'historic meetings in places of exceptional symbolic importance –like Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Mount Sinai—as a means of furthering dialogue with Jews and Muslims, and to arranging similar meetings elsewhere with the leaders of the great world religions.' Both these projects did in fact come to fruition.

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[79] Fitzgerald, 'Convergence and Divergence', pp. 1-2.
[80] Fitzgerald, 'Convergence and Divergence', p. 3.
[81] Fitzgerald, 'Convergence and Divergence', p. 1.
[82] Gioia, *Interreligious*, p. 109.

The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortations

The teaching documents which were based on the deliberations of the continental synods had important things to say about Islam and Christian-Muslim relations. I will take one representative example of these and offer a brief commentary.

Ecclesia in Africa, The Post-Synodal Apostolic

Ecclesia in Africa: Original Latin text.

<Muslimos quoque bonae voluntatis complecti hoc dialogi officium debet. Christianis haud licet oblivisci complures in animo habere Muslimos fidem imitari Abrahami ac vivendo satisfacere Decalogi postulatis>. Quod ad hoc pertinet *Synodi Nuntius* haec in luce ponit: <Caeli terraeque conditor, vivens Deus ac Dominus historiae, Pater magnae illius est familiae quam efficimus nos. Qua talis, testimonium Ei reddere nos vult observantes bona necnon religiosas cuiusque proprias traditiones, hominum promotioni ac progressioni adlaborantes simul omnibus in ordinibus. Nedum is esse cupiat cuius nomine alii occiduntur homines, credentes obstringit vitae servire in iustitia atque in pace>. Animus idcirco singulariter intendetur ut diverbium Islamicum-Christianum ex utraque parte religiosam conservet libertatem cum omnibus iis rebus quas secum infert,

English translation.

'Commitment to dialogue must also embrace all Muslims of goodwill. Christians cannot forget that many Muslims try to imitate the faith of Abraham and [satisfy] the demands of the Decalogue.' In this regard the *Message of the Synod* emphasises that the living God, 'Creator of heaven and earth and the Lord of history, is the father of the one great human family to which we all belong. As such, he wants us to bear witness to him through our respect for the values and religious traditions of each person, working together for human progress and development at all levels. Far from wishing to be the one in whose name a person would kill other people, he requires believers to join together in the service of life in justice and peace.' Particular care will therefore be taken so that Islamic-Christian dialogue respects on both sides the principle of religious freedom with all that this involves, also including external and public

non exemptis externis publicis fidei demonstrationibus. Vocantur Christiani et Muslimi ut sese ad provehendum dialogum obstringant qui ab irenismo pessimae notae sit immunis aut a fundamentalismo militante, utque vocem tollant contra rationes politicas et actiones infidas, quemadmodum etiam contra omnem defectum mutuae vicissitudinis, quoad religiosam libertatem.

[demonstrations] of faith. Christians and Muslims are called to commit themselves to promoting a dialogue free from the risks of false irenicism or militant fundamentalism, and to raising their voices against unfair policies and practices, as well as against the lack of reciprocity in matters of religious freedom.[83]

Exhortation, 14-9-1995

A major feature of almost all of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortations was the concern voiced about the rise of 'Radical Islamism' or 'Islamic Fundamentalism' throughout those continents where, because of demographic factors, dialogue between Christians and Muslims was a key issue.

It was felt that the world-wide dialogue would suffer greatly if the issue of 'reciprocity', that is the full recognition of religious freedom for Christians (and others) in Islamic states, was not adequately dealt with. This concern was also an important feature of the Synod held in Europe.[84]

These post-Synodal texts, namely: *Ecclesia in Africa*, *Ecclesia in America*, *Ecclesia in Asia*, *Ecclesia in Europa* and *Ecclesia in Oceania*; are indicative of the tone of solemn teaching documents produced in the latter part of John Paul's reign. To some extent theological and explicitly religious questions receive less attention. In the latter stages of his pontificate the really vital issues in the world-wide encounter between Christianity and Islam were seen to be those of a socio-political nature.[85]

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[83] Gioia, *Interreligious*, pp. 112-113. I have modified parts of the text where the standard English translation is insufficiently faithful to the original Latin. These changes are clearly indicated in square parentheses.

[84] '*Ecclesia in Europa*: On Christ Alive in His Church the Source of Hope for Europe', CTS, London, 2003, p. 44.

[85] This feature seems set to continue in the pontificate of Benedict XVI.

The Pope's Jubilee Pilgrimage

Those plans for a Jubilee pilgrimage did indeed come to fruition. In the Jubilee year the Pope was to visit several places associated with the history of salvation. He visited Egypt, during which he made a journey to Mount Sinai. This visit was marked also by the Pope's entrance into Al-Azhar University in Cairo, at which he gave an historic address. For a thousand years Al-Azhar has been regarded as one of the great centres of Islamic scholarship; that a Pope should visit the university and address the *ulama* was highly symbolic of the developments which had taken place since the Council. He visited Jerusalem, celebrating Christian liturgies there. He prayed at the Western Wall. He went to the 'Temple Mount' itself, within proximity of the Aqsa Mosque, in order to address Muslim dignitaries and faithful. During his pilgrimage he was able to visit the Jewish museum dedicated to the remembrance of the *Shoah*, 'Yad Vashem', and the Palestinian refugee camp at Deheishe. In a historical religious service in Rome on the eve of the Jubilee he expressed sorrow for those events in history when some members of the Catholic Church may have caused injury to others, including non-Christians. In the same service he prayed for a 'healing of memories'. During the following year, 2001, he was able to enter the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, becoming the first Pope in history to do so.

Areas for further discussion

Pope John Paul wrote that, outside of Judaism and Christianity, Islam is undoubtedly the other 'great' monotheistic religion of the world.[86] As we have seen, he demonstrated a great respect for Muslims, and aspects of their Islamic faith, throughout his pontificate. John Paul was acutely aware of how Christians need to discover, in increasing richness, what Muslims actually do believe, and how they practice their faith. Here I wish to offer some further discussion of Qur'anic monotheism, the status of Muhammad and Qur'anic revelation.

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[86] John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Virrorio Messori, ed., Jenny and Martha McPhee, trans., Jonathan Cape, London, 1994, p. 91.

Qur'anic monotheism[87]

Arguably the most memorable allocution delivered by John Paul II on the subject of Christian-Muslim relations was the address he made at the invitation of the Muslim ruler of Morocco, King Hasan II, in 1985. Within the context of the teaching of Vatican II, especially *Nostra Aetate* and *Dignitatis Humanae*, the Pope sought to explore a *shared* Christian-Muslim vision of their common beliefs and the establishment of mutual respect and understanding, as well as the promotion and defence of justice and peace.[88] In his address to a group of young people in Morocco which is often quoted, the Pope asserted that:

> We believe in the same God, the one God, the living God, the God who created the world and brings his creatures to their perfection ... God asks that we should listen to his voice ... We believe in God. We are worshippers of God. We are seekers of God ... We must respect each other, and we must also stimulate each other in good works on the path of God.[89]

This speech is recognised as a ground-breaking piece of theological reflection in its own right. In many parts of the speech one can hear the strong echo of the words of the Second Vatican Council, indeed many of the speeches, allocutions and written documents draw strongly on *Nostra Aetate*, and *Lumen Gentium*. But the way in which his words were deployed and the craft with which they were adapted to fit the needs of their audiences, in this speech and many others, means that they cannot be seen as mere reiterations. Subtle changes of emphasis rendered new meanings. The most important characteristics of the Casablanca 'text' are its emphatic and rhetorical style, it contains a force and conviction that the Council documents somehow lack. Within everyday pastoral contexts the words of the Council were often brought to life in this way.

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[87] There are similar discussions of these issues in Kate Zebiri, *Muslims and Christians Face to Face*, Oneworld, Oxford, 2000, and Muhammad, *Muslim-Christian Relations*. Some overlap is inevitable, however in referring to *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (see reference above) and drawing on the material found in *Encounter* and *Islamochristiana* (and in other works) my observations are distinct from theirs.

[88] See Heiner Bielefeldt, 'Secular Human Rights: Challenge and Opportunity to Christians and Muslims', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Volume 7, No. 3, October, 1996, pp. 311-325.

[89] 'To the Young Muslims of Morocco', August 19 1985', in *Islamochristiana, 11*, 1985, pp. 297ff.

As the Pope explains, he did not regard his visit to Morocco as 'simply a courtesy visit', but rather as an 'event of a truly pastoral nature ... an unprecedented event'.[90]

The most notable feature of the Casablanca speech, taken as one example, is its personal style, transforming the third person description of Islam found in the Council documents '*They* worship the one God' (*Nostra Aetate*) and 'along with us [in some translations this reads 'together with us'] *they* worship the one merciful God' (*Lumen Gentium*), to the language of creedal fellowship, '*We* believe in the same God'. As I have already noted, in *Sources of Renewal*, a book he wrote as Cardinal Archbishop of Cracow, just prior to his election as Pope, and intended as a commentary on aspects of the Council documents, the then Karol Wojtyla mentions the phrase from *Lumen Gentium 16* 'together with us' as being of particular significance. It is not surprising that he sought to develop this understanding as Pope, and to place it within a new context which was much more inclusive, personalised and unequivocal in its evaluation of the common monotheistic faith of Christians and Muslims.[91]

John Paul II, for instance, took an equally important step in confronting the issue of naming God in *Muslim* terms. As I have mentioned, the Council documentation and most of the post-conciliar literature, uses the seemingly generic (but characteristically Christian) term 'God' to describe the deity. But in an unprecedented move, in his book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, John Paul refers to God as 'Allah'. In fact it is important to cite the whole quotation: 'As a result of their monotheism, believers in Allah are particularly close to us'.[92] The recognition of specifically Muslim language and concepts is highly significant. This development is a self-conscious move from an attempt to refer to Muslim concepts in terms of Christian ones, to a description of a Muslim concept in terms of its own self reference.

The Status of Muhammad

Perhaps the most striking feature of the *Guidelines* produced by the PCID during John Paul II's reign, is the helpful way in which it approaches the

[90] John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold*, p. 94.
[91] Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II), *Sources of Renewal*, p. 129.
[92] John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold*, p. 91.

issue of Muhammad's prophethood. Indeed the *Guidelines* go a long way to addressing the issues raised by Anawati from the Catholic side, and the concerns of Siddiqui, Aydin and others from the Muslim side. It calls on Christians to:

> [F]ully respect the deep affection which Muslims feel and manifest toward their Prophet ... Christians should try to appreciate the authentic value of the life and work of the Prophet of Islam, taking into consideration the time and the environment in which he lived. They must renounce firmly 'all occasions where lack of respect has been shown, where incorrect statements in speech or in writing have been made, where unhelpful, even insulting, suggestions have been offered with reference to Muhammad, the venerated Prophet of Islam.' Instead of these negative judgements which came out of former concern for polemics and apologetics, Christians should assess in an objective way, and in consonance with their faith exactly what was the inspiration, the sincerity, and the faithfulness of the Prophet Muhammad, making their judgement within the framework, first, of his personal response to the commands of God, and then, on a wider scale, that of the working of providence in world history ... Respecting the requirements of dialogue, both parties need to take into consideration their differing definitions of prophethood in the fullest sense. So Christians will not require that Muslims recognize in Jesus all of the qualities which Christianity has conferred upon him ... And, in like manner, a Muslim should not require that a Christian recognize in Muhammad all of the qualities that Islam has attributed to him ... Christians are inclined to perceive that Muhammad was a great literary, political and religious genius, and that he possessed particular qualities which enabled him to lead multitudes to the worship of the one true God. But at the same time, they find in him evidence of certain mistakes and important misapprehensions. They also discern in him marks of prophethood. [93]

The issue of Muhammad's status, according to a Catholic understanding, is obviously a very sensitive point for Muslims in dialogue. Muslim dissatisfaction is based on what they regard as the Church's

[93] PCID, *Guidelines*, pp. 57-58.

equivocation and avoidance with regard to the language of prophethood. For instance, in a collection of papers outlining a possible Catholic Christian response to frequently asked questions posed by Muslims in dialogue, the interlocutor asks, 'As for you, Christians, do you recognize all the prophets, including Muhammad?'[94] A stronger and perhaps more frequently asked version of the question may be, 'We accept Jesus as a prophet ... Why do Christians not accept Muhammad?'[95] As George Anawati has made clear, this issue needed urgent attention once the Council was over, but the general failure of Catholic (and Protestant) theologians to address the issue means that they have not properly heard the Muslim voice, and have consequently frustrated the development of hetero-description.

The solemn Magisterium, especially since Vatican II, remains silent on the question of Muhammad's prophethood, on the other hand the *Guidelines* produced by PCID have been very helpful in articulating the permissible parameters of Catholic discourse concerning Muhammad. Occasionally among Catholics there may be a straightforward denial of Muhammad's prophethood. More usually there is a qualified acceptance attributing to Muhammad a place of honour among the great religious figures of history. But now it seems also permissible for an official Catholic theologian, such as Jacques Dupuis, to assert that: 'The acknowledgement of Muhammad as a genuine prophet of God is no longer unusual in Christian theology'.[96] This assertion would categorically *not* have been viewed favourably at the time of the Council, nevertheless this and other such statements are now given a degree of acceptance among scholars. It should be noted however that many Catholics take issue with Dupuis on this point. It remains the case that the solemn Magisterium has made no official statement, and is unlikely to do so in the near future.

Dupuis' comment demonstrates that the fruit of forty years work on the issue of Muhammad's 'prophethood' has resulted in a situation where there is at least a readiness among Catholics to consider this question seriously. The difficulty with Dupuis and others however, is that Muhammad's prophethood is understood primarily within the categories

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[94] Robert Caspar, 'Trying to Answer Questions: I—The Prophethood of Muhammad', in *Encounter, 151*, January 1989, p. 5.

[95] Fitzgerald, 'Convergence and Divergence', p. 7.

[96] See Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, Orbis, New York, 2nd edition 2001), p. 245.

of Christian theology.[97] I would like to join others in problematizing the assumption that prophethood in the Biblical and Qur'anic traditions can be so easily equated, not least because of the different teleological function 'prophethood' serves in the Bible and the Qur'an. Here I want to illustrate this teleological difference. As Robert Caspar explains:

> This [the concept of prophecy] is exactly where lies the essential difference between Christianity and Islam: for the Muslim, the prophetic revelation reaches its climax and is terminated with Muhammad, 'the Seal of the Prophets'; for the Christian, the revelation reaches its peak with Jesus Christ, the very Word of God who became man and so is the fullness of revelation.[98]

Unfortunately because Caspar himself places Muhammad within the context of prophecy understood essentially from the point of view of the 'biblical tradition', he fails to take heed of his own request for caution. He argues that the primary 'Prophetic charism' belongs to those prophets explicitly mentioned in the Christian scriptures, to the 'Christian people' who gather in the name of Christ as the Church of God and to 'the deeds of the Magisterium' under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; nevertheless he asserts that the 'Spirit of prophethood ... can be active outside the Church.' Caspar cites examples throughout the history of the Church where non-Christians have been attributed with holiness. It was thought that the lifestyles and work of many individuals to be found in 'pagan' cultures and religions, outside the faith of Israel and the Church, have shown evidence of an awareness of the '*logos spermatikos*' (the 'seeds of the God's Word'). He acknowledges some of those mentioned in the work of the Church Fathers, theologians and various Christian writers throughout the centuries.[99]

As a starting point I would like to suggest that Yves Congar's view probably represents the instincts of many contemporary Catholic scholars when he asks:

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[97] From among the experts two important Catholic responses to the above questions appear in *Encounter*. The work of both Robert Caspar and Maurice Borrmans offer useful contributions.

[98] Caspar, 'The Prophethood of Muhammad', p. 10.

[99] Caspar, 'The Prophethood of Muhammad', p. 7.

> Is Mohammed an inspired prophet? I think that one can accept that, not in the sense of full biblical inspiration, but in the sense in which many religious men are inspired. Beyond question Muhammed was an extremely profound religious figure. [100]

Congar's opinion is to be respected, he is regarded as one of the great twentieth-century Catholic theologians, although by his own admission, he did not feel that he had studied Islam sufficiently well to be able to make an *expert* judgement.[101] His view is representative of many others in that the terms he uses lack sufficient qualification, as do the concepts that underpin them.

The fact that the Magisterium has taken 'no formal stand' on the 'delicate matter' of Muhammad's prophethood leads Caspar to outline what he sees as two important highlights in the development of the question within contemporary debate. He cites Cardinal Journet's belief that Muhammad had what he described as a 'partial prophetic charisma', and Claude Geffre's 'public declaration' at the second Muslim-Christian encounter at Tunis in 1979, that Muhammad's message is 'a Word of God ...', as examples of the warmth and depth of some early post-conciliar Catholic appreciations of Muhammad. But as Caspar explains, 'It is the practice of the Magisterium to speak only when theological research has made substantial progress and reached a fair consensus; which is not yet the case ...', and the Church still seems a long way from deciding in any definitive way on this question. [102]

In David Kerr's article, 'The Prophet Muhammad in Christian Theological Perspective', he describes Maurice Borrmans as, '[o]ne of the principle interpreters of the Council's statements about Muslims'. Kerr goes on to point out the salient features of the PCID's *Guidelines*. Indeed, even though it doesn't mention Muhammad in the solemn Magisterium, still less anything to do with his prophethood, the Church calls for Catholics to adopt an attitude of respect towards the tenets of the Islamic faith, not only because parts of it resonate with the Christian faith, but importantly because the Islamic faith is, in itself, intrinsically worthy of respect. Individual Catholics may conclude that respect *for* another's (right to his/her) faith is adequate, without the implication of

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[100] Bernard Lauret, *Fifty Years of Catholic Theology: Conversations with Yves Congar*, John Bowden, trans., SCM Press, London, 1988, p. 34.

[101] Lauret, *Conversations with Yves Congar*, p. 34.

[102] Robert Caspar, 'The Prophethood of Muhammad', p. 8.

any form of acceptance of the truth *content* of that faith in any objective theological sense. Other Christians may feel the need to 'discern' in faith' a more profound appreciation of Muhammad's message. There are those who Kerr (following Borrmans) suggests may 'feel moved to recognise that Muhammad was a great religious, political and literary genius, and that particular graces were not lacking in him for multitudes to be led to the worship of the one true God.' [103]

The Catholic Church certainly excludes bigotry and obscurantism, and encourages a 'general spirit of openness ... towards Islam'[104] as an attitude for all Catholics. While the expert judgements of theologians contained within the *Guidelines* are 'not binding', and all Catholics can 'feel free to build [their] own opinion'; nevertheless, respect for the person of Muhammad, and the regard in which he is held by faithful Muslims, is, I believe, certainly required of Catholics.[105]

Undoubtedly caution and prudence are advised when attempting to deal theologically with these sorts of questions. Beyond agreeing that Muhammad's proclamation of faith is a reiteration of the Abrahamic faith in 'God's unicity and transcendence', common to Muslims and Christians,[106] the Magisterium allows a spectrum of views to exist on the question of Muhammad. Provided that in holding a particular view of Muhammad, an individual does not negate, or seriously call into question those core beliefs at the centre of Christianity, such as the Incarnation, the Trinity, belief in the Redemption through the Paschal Mystery of Christ's Cross and Resurrection, and other such doctrines; which are not shared with Islam but which require faithful assent; a Catholic is at liberty to take his or her own view. [107] An understanding which concludes that Muhammad was 'in the line of the prophets', or that he showed evidence of a 'Prophetic charism', is permissible; but an outright rejection that any significance should be given to Muhammad, arguably is not.

Certainly Muslims 'cannot require' Christians to believe that Muhammad is a 'prophet', less so that he is 'the Seal of the Prophets', any more than a Christian can require a Muslim to accept the divinity of Christ. Any such admission on either side would seem to entail that

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[103] David A Kerr, 'The Prophet Muhammad in Christian Theological Perspective', *Encounter, 106*, June 1984, pp. 7-8.

[104] Caspar, 'The Prophethood of Muhammad', pp. 8-9.

[105] Caspar, 'The Prophethood of Muhammad', p. 9.

[106] Although this is implied rather than categorically stated.

[107] Caspar, 'The Prophethood of Muhammad', p. 8.

in order to enter into dialogue the Christian would have to 'become a Muslim (or the other way around)'.[108]

Caspar makes it clear that to refer to Christ as the 'Seal of the Prophets' is tempting but ill-advised, because the phrase is 'typically a Muslim one'. He argues that to use this title would also be 'tantamount to closing the door' on the question of Muhammad's prophethood.[109] Casper does however refer to Jesus Christ as the 'Prophet par excellence'. In Caspar's view while prophetic tradition 'reaches its summit in Christ' [110] this 'fullness of revelation does not prevent a Christian from acknowledging that God may have chosen other ways to make himself known to humankind, before Jesus and *after* him.'[111]

Caspar's judgements are consistent with the *Guidelines* and he argues that, stopping short of a Muslim becoming a Catholic or a Catholic becoming a Muslim, the dialogue partners ought to accept that 'dialogue invites a respect of different definitions of 'perfect prophethood' without the consciences of either party being violated.

Ultimately Caspar feels able to state his own personal opinion too. He concludes that,

> [E]ven if the Church has not taken an official position, I am prepared, personally, to recognize that the Qur'an contains a Word of God, not only for the Muslims but for me as well, I recognize in this powerful proclamation of the One and Only Transcendent God a reminder of Jesus' message, and an invitation to live more deeply in agreement with it. So, I do believe that Muhammad has received from God the mission to proclaim this essential piece of truth, which retains its full relevance to our present world. [112]

While various individual Catholic scholars strongly advocate the recognition of some 'prophetic' character in Muhammad's identity and mission, none seem prepared to accept, without reservation, his prophethood understood in the Muslim sense, and thereby demonstrate

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[108] Caspar, 'The Prophethood of Muhammad', p. 10. These points are similarly made in Kerr's citations of Borrmans' work on p. 8 of his article.

[109] Caspar, 'The Prophethood of Muhammad', p. 10.

[110] Caspar, 'The Prophethood of Muhammad', p. 7.

[111] Caspar, 'The Prophethood of Muhammad', p. 10. [My emphasis].

[112] Caspar, 'The Prophethood of Muhammad', p. 10.

their inability to resist prematurely 'theologizing' the issue. Insufficient recognition is given to the fact that dialogue partners may well have to accept the incommensurability of their opposing truth claims, without prematurely seeking to resolve the asymmetries by 'theological' means or mere rejection of the other.

Kerr criticizes Borrmans, and other Catholic theologians in their treatment of Muhammad, because he feels that they ultimately fail to build on the 'potentialities inherent in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.' Kerr wishes that Borrmans had 'explored the issue...more deeply from a Christian angle'; Kerr argues that because 'he does not, and that no other Catholic theologian scholars of Islam have taken the matter further', the situation has led to significant 'Muslim disappointment with the effects of the Council'. [113]

It would be mistaken to think that Muslim disappointment will be avoided by means of further theological concessions being made to them on this issue; because if these theological concessions are always couched within the framework of Christian concepts, they will always ultimately be a disappointment to Muslims.

In the absence of an official opinion on Muhammad (and on other issues) Catholic scholars would do well to avoid the tendency either to give an overly detailed account of Muhammad's prophethood with *too many* qualifications, or a vague account of it which requires too much *further* qualification, both of which leave Muslims wondering what Christian scholars are *actually* saying about Muhammad.

The Pope is allowed to hold his own personal opinion on this issue as an individual believer. John Paul II seemed to give some indication of his personal viewpoint on the issue in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. In a creative and enigmatic response to the question of Muhammad's prophethood, and one which may allow Christians and Muslims to reach beyond what seems like the present *impasse*, Pope John Paul II, *without* explanation or qualification, refers to Muhammad as 'the "Prophet"'.[114] His words reflect exactly how Muhammad is regarded by the Catholic Church at large; he is essentially a bracketed figure with an uncertain status, whom Christian faith and doctrine find it genuinely difficult to categorize.

In this way the Pope does not attempt to settle the question about whether it is possible for Catholics to accept, unequivocally, the

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[113] Kerr, 'The Prophet Muhammad', p. 8.

[114] John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold*, p. 93.

'prophethood' of Muhammad. He calls Muhammad 'the Prophet' in parentheses. In this way I would argue that he recognizes the likelihood that it is impossible to resolve this issue according to the way it is dealt with by most Catholic theologians. By 'affirming Muslim's "religiosity"' in this particular way, and by choosing the words that he does use, he seeks not to resolve the issue, but rather to facilitate the theological discussion by carefully reproducing an account of Muslim faith-language as it is contained in their self-description.[115] In this sense he seeks to avoid the pitfall of developing a harmful position which would 'negate the importance of the self understanding of the Other', or another erroneous position that would lead to a 'domestication of difference'.[116] This approach allows appropriate space for further discernment of the issues in question to take place, while respecting that 'Christians and Muslims differ with regard to the criteria for recognizing that prophecy which is definitive.'[117] Like John Paul II, it may be better for Catholics to use this term without too much attendant explanation, so that the language of Muslim faith is accepted on face value, and respected for what it is, i.e., the *Muslim description* of Muhammad.

The Qur'an as revelation

A H Johns suggests that, 'It is impossible ... to think of the Qur'an without Muhammad'. [118] It is not therefore surprising that Catholic views of the Qur'an will reflect Catholic uncertainties about the prophethood of Muhammad.

Without wishing to enter into a long theological discussion about the Incarnation, the Trinity and the question of Redemption through Christ's Cross and Resurrection, it is sufficient to acknowledge that the Qur'an denies each of these central Christian doctrines.

The Qur'an ('Koran') is referred to on several occasions within the allocutions of Pope John Paul II. Here I include a selection to demonstrate

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[115] See discussion in D'Costa, *The Meeting of the Religions*, p. 107.

[116] D'Costa, *The Meeting of the Religions*, p. 109.

[117] Maurice Borrmans, 'Islam and Christianity: Common Doctrinal Basis and Areas of Convergence', *Encounter 23*, March 1976, p. 7.

[118] A H Johns, 'The Qur'an as a Human Document: Muhammad the Man as Revealed by the Qur'an', *Encounter 86*, June-July 1982, p. 3.

the development of a tradition within contemporary papal teaching of the practice of referring to the Qur'an. In his address to a group of Catholics and Muslims gathered in Ankara on 29 November 1979, he noted that: '[F]or the Koran, the sacred book of the Muslims, although man is made of dust, "God breathed into him his spirit and endowed him with hearing, sight and heart," that is intelligence (Sura 32: 9).'[119]

Again in his visit to the Philippines on 20 February 1981 the Pope alluded to the Qur'an in an address to Muslims when he said that: 'Christians, just like you, seek the basis and model of mercy in God himself, the God to whom your Book gives the very beautiful name of al-Rahman ...'[120] In an allusion to the Qur'an, he exhorted Muslims in Nigeria on 14 February 1982 'to excel in good works'.[121] To the participants of a symposium on 'Holiness in Christianity and in Islam' on 9 May 1985 the Pope said:

> All true holiness comes from God, who is called 'The Holy One' in the sacred books of the Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Your holy Koran calls God 'Al-Quddus,' as in the verse: 'He is God, besides whom there is no other, the Sovereign, the Holy, the (source of) peace' (Koran 59, 23) ... Thus, the Koran calls you up to uprightness (al-salah), to conscientious devotion (al-taqwa), to goodness (al-husn), and to virtue (al-birr), which is described as believing in God, giving one's wealth to the needy, freeing captives, being constant in prayer, keeping one's word, and being patient in times of suffering, hardship and violence (Koran 2, 177).[122]

On 12 August 1985 in Cameroon, the Pope alluded to the famous Qur'anic quotation from Sura 50, 16: 'God is the origin and end of our lives, "he who is closer to us than our jugular vein".'[123]

On 26 February 1986 in Rome, whilst addressing a joint group of Christians, Jews and Muslims, the Pope compared the scriptures of Christians and Muslims when he noted that: 'Both the Bible and the Koran

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[119] Gioia, *Interreligious*, p. 221. Gioia wrongly refers to 32: 8.
[120] Gioia, *Interreligious*, p. 237.
[121] Gioia, *Interreligious*, p. 251.
[122] Gioia, *Interreligious*, p. 283.
[123] Gioia, *Interreligious*, p. 291.

teach that mercy and justice are two attributes most characteristic of God.' Incidentally, in the very same allocution the Pope mentions Muhammad, when he compares the scriptures of Christians and Muslims, referring to 'Muhammad's night journey to God.'[124]

Again, the *Guidelines* make numerous references to the Qur'an. The depth of the Catholic appreciation of its meaning for Muslims is summed up in the following passage:

> Muslims consider the Qur'an to be the divine message transmitted directly to Muhammad in "clear Arabic speech" (Qur'an 16:103), in the course of his preaching in Mecca and Medina ... To Muslims the holy book constitutes the final, definitive and perfect revelation of previous books (Torah, or Pentateuch, Psalms and Gospel) ... Since it was directly revealed by God and sent down to earth in progressive sequences, the Qur'an possesses the uncreated character of the eternal Word ... The classical interpretation is that the holy book is not simply inspired, for God alone is its author and the Prophet Muhammad merely transmitted it ...[125]

Pope John Paul II is more cautious in his treatment of the Muslim claim that the Qur'an is the revealed word of God. Rather than having access to a presentation of an official teaching on the matter, we can gain some insights into the Pope's opinions from his personal reflections in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. In the book the Pope compares the Qur'an with the Biblical Tradition, here I wish to quote his judgement in full:

> Whoever reads the Old and New Testaments, and then reads the Koran, clearly sees the *process by which it completely reduces Divine Revelation*. It is impossible not to note the movement away from what God said about Himself, first in the Old Testament through the Prophets, and then finally in the New Testament through His Son. In Islam all the riches of God's self-revelation, which constitutes the heritage of the Old and New Testaments, has definitely been set aside. Some of the most beautiful names in the human language are given to the God of the Koran, but He is ultimately a God outside of the world, a God who is *only Majesty, never Emmanuel*, God-with-us. *Islam is not a religion of*

[124] Gioia, *Interreligious*, p. 329.
[125] PCID, *Guidelines*, p. 47.

> *redemption*. There is no room for the Cross and Resurrection. Jesus is mentioned, but only as a prophet who prepares for the last prophet, Muhammad. There is also mention of Mary, His Virgin Mother, but the tragedy of redemption is completely absent. For this reason not only the theology but also the anthropology of Islam is very different from Christianity. [126]

Compare this passage with a commentary by the Islamicist, Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald:

> Islam is the most radical of all the monotheistic religions ... This leads to a stress on divine transcendence to the disadvantage of other aspects, the net result being a certain agnosticism. The existence of God can be known, and his activity discerned [i.e. in the revelation of God's will in the Qur'an], but man can have no inkling of the divine nature, of God's own life. Islamic theology is thus essentially negative [in the sense of apophatic] in its approach, aiming to avoid all anthropomorphism.'[127]

In the Pope's commentary it is interesting to note that the deity is referred to as 'the God of the Koran', rather than simply as 'God'. We are reminded that in the same commentary the Pope has already used the Muslim term 'Allah'. In *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* the Pope mostly makes factual assertions with which most Muslims would likely agree. Not all Muslims would necessarily see in these observations the deficits which some have found. While references to the closeness of God are not lacking in Islam, a point which the Pope elsewhere acknowledges, there are some Muslims who were critical of these reflections.[128]

Despite a descriptive tendency in the Pope's method, D'Costa argues that he can also offer what seem to be 'deeply critical judgements' of some aspects of Islamic belief. In this sense Gavin D' Costa is aware of a form of 'dialectical'[129] method in the Pope's personal theological standpoint

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[126] John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold*, pp. 92-93. [Pope's own emphasis].

[127] Michael Fitzgerald, 'Convergence and Divergence', p. 3. My additional comments are given in square parentheses. These comments seek to qualify the sense in which Fitzgerald makes his points.

[128] Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi,, 'John Paul II and Islam', in *John Paul II and Interreligious Dialogue*, Byron L Sherwin, and Harold Kasimov, eds., Orbis, New York, pp. 185-204; Aydin, 'Towards a Theological Dialogue'; Mahmoud Ayoub, 'Pope John Paul II on Islam', in *Open Catholicism: The Tradition at its Best—Essays in Honour of Gerard S Sloyan*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, pp. 190-205.

on the issues raised in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. By 'dialectical' he means that within world religions the Pope judges some aspects to be 'positive', some 'negative'; there is 'never a question of 'yes' or 'no', but rather always both 'yes' and 'no', and the balance of each is in accordance with the subject matter at hand. D'Costa argues that the Pope is doing 'no more' than 'recognising those rays of Truth that enlighten men and women, in mixture with error', in this sense the Pope 'is not endorsing or criticizing religions in general, or any one in particular', namely Islam; but 'is clearly dialectical (in the yes/no sense) in his judgements in recognizing various commonalities and differences.'[130]

However, despite his reference to the reduction and setting aside of the 'riches' of revelation in the Qur'an, which certainly tends to suggest a value judgement rather than a mere description of the Islamic faith, nevertheless by comparing the Pope's commentary with that of Michael Fitzgerald's account, it isn't hard to see that the Pope's essential purpose in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* was to present a description of the Qur'an, rather than an theological critique. This point has not been sufficiently understood by those who too quickly jump to the conclusion that the Pope intended to give offence, rather than state the essential differences between Muslim and Christian self-description.

In terms of his language of symbolic gesture it should be noted that in the year before the Jubilee celebrations, on 14 May 1999, John Paul II, during an official audience with three Muslim dignitaries, one of whom was a Shi'ite, bowed reverentially towards a copy of the Qur'an and kissed it. At the time it was suggested by the Chaldean Patriarch, Raphael I, who witnessed the event, that, the gesture 'demonstrates that the Pope ... has great respect for Islam.' While this gesture was open to the interpretation of the viewer, it is difficult to disagree with the Patriarch's assessment.

Conclusion

Since the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church has gone through a profound change in terms of its largely positive re-evaluation of the religious beliefs and practices of Muslims. This has been seen most clearly in the post-conciliar teaching of Pope John Paul II. I essentially agree with

[129] D'Costa, The *Meeting of the Religions*, p. 107.
[130] D'Costa, *The Meeting of the Religions*, p. 106-107.

the Muslim-Christian Research Group[131] when they maintain that: 'The Council adopted no theological position on Islam.'[132] However, the one aspect of conciliar teaching which has real *theological* significance, as Robert Caspar indicates, is the assertion that Christians and Muslims worship/adore the same God. This thesis was by no means a consensus opinion among Catholic theologians prior to the conciliar period.[133] Today it is difficult to find Catholic scholars, working in the mainstream of Catholic theology, who would dispute this thesis.[134] Nevertheless, the judgement of Caspar, and the other members of the Muslim-Christian Research Group, is certainly true for most of the content of post-conciliar teaching. However the *description* of Islam in the post-conciliar texts is far more substantial than those at the Council, and in the various post-conciliar texts the omissions of Vatican II have been rectified.

The teaching documents produced at Vatican II, and the subsequent post-conciliar documents, whether they be 'papal documents', or those produced by the Roman dicasteries, demonstrate an increased sensitivity to the criticisms of Muslims in dialogue. The texts largely adopt an approach which attempts to describe Islam in the way in which Muslims themselves describe their own beliefs and practices. I give this textual approach the name 'hetero-description', in that the language and terminology of Islam are utilized in the documents, in order to give those Christians who read them a correct knowledge and understanding of Islam. The teachings are intended to prepare Catholics more adequately for dialogue and encounter; reflecting as they do what is received from Muslims during the process of dialogue and encounter. Presenting an accurate description of Muslim beliefs and practices in Church documents is itself an act of justice. All people have a right to be properly represented and understood. Muslims should be able to recognize themselves in the documents of the Catholic Church. The post-conciliar Church's attempt

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[131] French speaking experts, known as the 'Groupe de Recherche Islamo-Chretien' (or GRIC), based in Tunisia and other parts of North Africa.

[132] GRIC, *The Challenge of the Scriptures: The Bible and the Qur'an*, Stuart E Brown, trans., Orbis, New York, 1989, p. 59. See also Joseph Farrugia, *The Church and the Muslims: The Church's Consideration of Islam and the Muslim in the Documents of the Second Vatican Council*, Gozo Press, Valetta, 1988.

[133] See Pius XII, '*Fidei Donum*: On the Present Conditions of the Catholic Missions Especially in Africa', in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis 1957*, p. 230.

[134] Michael L Fitzgerald, '"Dialogue and Proclamation": A Reading in the Persective of Christian-Muslim Relations', in Daniel Kendall and Gerald O'Collins, eds., *In Many and Diverse Ways: In Honor of Jacques Dupuis*, p. 183.

to represent the Islamic religion in a fair manner in its teaching documents, especially during the pontificate of John Paul II, has been exemplary.

In the past many incorrect and hasty theological conclusions were reached prematurely, and on the basis of insufficient knowledge. At times this misrepresentation amounted to deliberate distortion. A variety of theological opinions are now held with reference to the 'status' of Islam within a Christian theological framework. When theological judgements are expressed by most contemporary Catholic scholars, they tend to be well-informed, sensitive, tentative and nuanced. The Catholic Church is working towards the construction of, what amounts to, a thorough 'phenomenology' of Islam in its teaching documents. I would argue that John Paul II's approach to this issue was, on the whole, positive, sensitive and progressive. His approach does not seek to prevent Christians and Muslims from holding with integrity to their own faith commitments, nor does it exclude Christian scholars from forming expert opinions in the course of their research, even if these are Christian theological ones. From a methodological standpoint, it tends with greater frequency to respect Muslim understandings and concepts and uses its terminology. Most importantly John Paul II's approach reflects and accepts the uncertainty of the issues and concepts involved, but increasingly without doing injury to the faith and self-description of the dialogue partner. As we have seen, at the beginning and towards the end of his pontificate, *Sources of Renewal* and *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* also give one insights into John Paul II's *personal* view of Muslim-Christian relations and of the religion of Islam. Often, as one would expect, these personal views were consistent with the teachings which he gave when exercising his office as Pope.

As John Paul II has himself argued, the process of dialogue by its nature requires 'time for progress and discernment'; part of the wisdom of this discernment process is a due respect for 'the slowness of the evolution of mentalities.'[135] John Paul's own regard for this evolution of mentalities seems to have bourn fruit in his own theological thinking.

Lucie Pruvost notes that the methodological approach of John Paul II, especially with regard to the Catholic-Muslim encounter, is often characterised firstly by 'a *description*' which is often, but not always, 'couched in comparative terms'. Once the comparisons are sufficiently established and accepted he 'progressively' searches for 'that which unites'. Paradoxically

[135] John Paul II, 'To the bishops of North Africa on their *ad limina* visit, Rome, 23 November 1981', Gioia, *Interreligious*, p. 246.

however that which often 'unites' dialogue partners (i.e. creates an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding between them) is an awareness that each is being represented according to their own self-description, rather than being judged according to the premature theological interpretation of their interlocutor's position.[136] Indeed the Pope describes beautifully the process of such an evolution when he suggests that it 'gradually makes possible a real renewal of mentalities, which facilitates the beneficial transition from ignorance to knowledge of the Muslim faith, from indifference to openness, from rejection to dialogue.'[137]

Pope John Paul, both as an independent commentator, and in exercising the office of Pope, was prepared to display his radicalism in bold and generous gestures towards Muslims and the Islamic faith which are gradually enabling further developments in the dialogue to emerge. These developments have brought Catholic theological appraisals of Muslims and the Islamic faith considerably further than they were at the time of the Council.

It is precisely Pope John Paul II's commitment to the due process of dialogue, which by its nature requires 'time for progress and discernment'; and because of the wisdom exercised in the discernment process in his respect for 'the slowness of the evolution of mentalities', that the adherence to hetero-description may be developed.[138]

The teachings of the SecondVatican Council, and the subsequent post-conciliar teachings, have, unfortunately, yet to be adequately 'received' by Catholics. Without effective dissemination of these teachings, and without a willingness to learn, grow in understanding, and to engage with Muslims, Church teachings, and the action of the Holy See on behalf of the members of the Church, can seem removed from the realities of life, and be viewed as the preserve of 'religious experts'. The words and gestures of John Paul II, and the official Church teachings which emerged during his pontificate, are both an encouragement and a comfort to those Catholics who are involved in the encounter with Muslims. Let us hope that these rich teachings of the Catholic Church become better known.

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[136] Lucie Pruvost, 'From Tolerance ... to Spiritual Emulation', *Encounter 76*, June-July 1981, p. 4. This text may also be found in *Islamochristiana, 6*, (1980), pp1-9. This piece was translated into English from the French by Michael L Fitzgerald. [My emphasis].

[137] John Paul II, 'To the bishops of Senegal on their *ad limina* visit, Rome, 26 January 1982', Gioia, *Interreligious*, p. 250.

[138] John Paul II, 'To the bishops of North Africa on their *ad limina* visit, Rome, 23 November 1981', Gioia, *Interreligious*, p. 246.

HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF CATHOLIC-SHI^{C}A DIALOGUE IN IRAN

Leonard Harrow

The aim of this paper is to give a brief and selective overview of the long-standing contacts between Christianity (and latterly Catholicism in particular) and Iran. It needs to be clear that it is a personal reflection and very much from a Western standpoint. It assumes that, notwithstanding the erudite and learned discussions between the two faiths of Christianity and Shi^{c}a Islam, these need to be rooted in the historical reality and that the historical context brings additional insights to the dialogue.

In this presentation it is hoped to make a few observations, and draw attention to some contacts between the two faith communities, wherein this particular gathering, and others like it, might perhaps be seen to be the latest phase of a long history. Reference will also be made to those themes between Catholic and Shi^{c}a where there seems common ground: i.e. to point out common themes in the respective heritages and to where there is an apparent closeness rather than a separation. It seems the study of such themes from an historical viewpoint remains in general an underdeveloped field.

The relationship between the two faiths may be seen as falling into two crude phases. The first, covering a period up to the 13th century, is when Islam in Iran is in general in contact with the various Churches of the East. The second covers a period from the 13th century to the present, when the Catholic Church becomes involved with an Iran where the Shi^{c}a tradition is dominant, and which sees—in the 19th century—a period when the country also becomes an area of interest for various Protestant Churches.

A number of recent works is now available which have looked at the history of Christianity in Iran.[1] However, by and large, these works

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[1] Mention should be made of the major work of Jean Maurice Fiey, especially his *Communautés syriaques en Iran et Irak des origins à 1552*, Variorum Reprints, London, 1979. General works,

have been based on Western perspectives and sources. Much still remains to be done to give an historical account from the Iranian viewpoint.

It should be stated that we do not regard it as appropriate in this paper to discuss why Christianity has not been more 'successful' in the area, a subject which demands consideration of factors that would require far more space and time than are available. The fact remains that Christianity has not found Iran proper a particularly fertile region.[2]

From early times to the 13th century

Christian contacts with Islam till recently were from early times mainly with the Arab Sunni world, although Iran's familiarity with Christianity has a very long history. Indeed, an important part of early Eastern Church history is concerned with the vicissitudes of the Christian communities under the Sasanian empire (244-651), a frequent arch-enemy of the later Roman empire, and the changing, difficult roles they were perceived to play in the overarching power politics of period and region.[3] They were perceived as a potential fifth column of the West or a dissident group who could be used by the shahs to embarrass their western enemies as the political situation demanded—a frequently fluctuating and dangerous

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with important biographies include Aubrey R Vine, *The Nestorian Churches: A Concise History of Nestorian Christianity in Asia from the Persian Schism to the Modern Assyrians, Independent* Press, London, 1937, Aziz S Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame: 1968, Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia, Vol. I: Beginnings to 1500,* HarperSanFrancisco, San Francisco, 1992, Wilhem Baum and Dietmar W Winkler, *The Church of the East. A Concise History*, RoutledgeCurzon, London, 2003. In Persian, H B Dehqani-Tafti, *Masih va masihiyyat nazd-i Iraniyan*, 3 vols., Sohrab Books, Basingstoke, 1992-4. For the Catholic-Shi'a relationship in particular, see J A Bill and J A Williams, *Roman Catholics and Shi'i Muslims, Prayer, Passions and Politics*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2002. See also art. 'Bible', *Encyclopaedia Iranica.*

[2] There are hardly any vestiges of Christianity in the archaeological record in Iran proper up to the 13th century. Although some sites, for example, Nishapur, have revealed artefacts indicating the Christian presence. See Charles K Wilkinson, "Christian Remains from Nishapur", in Oktay Aslanapa and Rudolf Naumann (eds), *Forschungen zur Kunst Asiens, In Memoriam Kurt Erdmann*, Istanbul, 1969, pp. 79-87.

[3] See, for example, Sebastian P Brock, 'Christians in the Sasanian Empire: A Case of Divided Loyalties', *Studies in Church History*, vol. 18 (1982), pp. 1-19, and A V Williams, 'Zoroastrians and Christians in Sasanian Iran', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 1996, pp. 37-53.

state of affairs that erupted into periodic persecutions.[4] As Christianity never became a major religion in Iran proper, in subsequent ages it continued to be seen as an outside, foreign influence and viewed with fluctuating degrees of suspicion by the authorities in Iran. Moreover, with the arrival of Islamic hegemony, the Christian community would have been subject to *dhimmi* status. Christianity faced in Islam not only the vigour of the new religion but also the potential legalised disadvantages of *dhimmi* status. It is unclear the degree to which this status was a real hindrance to progress of the Christian community in the east.

The collapse of the Sasanian empire before the Arab armies of Islam is a significant element in the national memory of Iran. We cannot ignore the fact that the historical success of Islam in its early centuries is to be contrasted with the experience of early Christian communities. Islam, i.e. Sunni Islam, as a great political as well as religious force, was spectacularly and immediately successful—within a hundred years it stretched from Spain to China. This was not paralleled by the experience of early Christianity which had to struggle for some three centuries before becoming the state religion of the late Roman empire. And further, as a counterpoint to this, the experience of the Shi'a, in the early period, was often within the political dominance of Sunnism, where the Shi'a community was often disadvantaged—and this in turn had a deep effect on the historical perspectives and outlook of the Shi'a community.

The early history of Christianity in Iran, however, is a tradition where the Christian Syriac tradition predominates. The general situation from Christian sources suggests an outline of the main groups concerned. The latter are often in areas which stand today outside the modern borders of Iran but which were (and remain) within its cultural and historic orbit. This remains a very substantial area. It must not be forgotten that the cultural influence of Iran is significant in Turkey, Afghanistan, in Central Asia (especially Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan), to the confines of China and into what is now Pakistan and northern India. In Central Asia and India the Persian language remained until comparatively recently the court and official language.

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[4] Moffat, *op. cit.*, 145 (citing L C Casartelli, 'Sasanians', *Hastings Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. II) says: 'One estimate is that as many as 190,000 Persian Christians died in the terror. It was worse than anything suffered in the West under Rome ... Whatever the level of suffering, such figures would have applied mainly to the western areas of the Sasanian empire, i.e. Mesopotamia and the adjacent regions. This *parti pris* of the Iranian authorities towards Christians is an ongoing theme in the history of the relations between the two.

The main Christian groups familiar in the early period in Iran (using terms also reflected in Muslim sources)[5] are the Church of the East ('Nestorians'), the Melkites and to some extent the 'Jacobites'.

Thus we know that a community of Melkites, who followed the authority of the patriarch of Antioch and the Greek-speaking church and accepted the Chalcedonian formula, were moved around 762, by al-Mansur (754-55 AD), second caliph of the 'Abbasid dynasty, from Ctesiphon/Mada'in (the old Sasanian capital) to Chach/Shash (modern Tashkent) with its Catholicos.[6] Also there was a community in Khwarazm, in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya [Oxus] and possibly in Marv also. The likely significant Melkite community in Xin-jiang is outside our terms of reference.[7]

Similarly there is evidence that Syrian Orthodox communities deported from Edessa were established in the 7th century under the Sasanians (i.e. before Islam) in Sistan (now forming the south eastern border of Iran with Afghanistan) and Herat (now in western Afghanistan) and that bishoprics were established. Farah in Sistan also had a bishop by the early 9th century.[8]

Clearly, these early 'deportations', and groups of merchants following in their wake, is a significant factor in the origin of many Christian communities.[9]

Numerous examples of communities of the Church of the East are known. Of course, the main centres remained in Mesopotamia (Iraq) which was often under the political control of Iran but there were important centres in adjacent areas of Iran proper, as in Fars and Khuzistan.[10] The main Church of the East centres within the orbit of Iran seem to have been the Metropolitanate of Marv (whose extensive ruins lie near the city

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[5] E.g., Al-Khwarazmi, Abu 'Abdallah Muhammad, *Mafatih al-'Ulum*, ed. G van Vloten (Leiden, 1895), p. 28; tr. C E Bosworth, 'Al-Khwarazmi on the Secular and Religious titles of the Byzantines and Christians', *Cahiers de Tunisie* 35, nos. 139-140, Tunis, 1987, repr. in *The Arabs, Byzantium and Islam. Studies in Early Islamic History and Culture*, No. X, Aldershot, 1996, pp. 29-36, and Abu Raihan Biruni, *Al-Athar al-Baqiyah*, tr. C Edward Sachau, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, London, 1879, p. 282.

[6] 'Christianity', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 530, and 'Deportations', *EIr*, ii.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] *Ibid.* Also Jean Maurice Fiey, 'Chrétientés syriaques du Horasan et du Ségestan', *op. cit.*, Variorum Reprints, London, 1979, p. 94ff.

[9] Fiey, 'Communautés syriaques ...', *op. cit.*, pp. 282, 285, 286, and 'Les provinces sud-caspiennes ...', *op. cit.*, pp. 332-3.

[10] The map shown by Fiey, 'Les Communautés syriaques en Iran et Irak des origins à 1552', *op. cit.*, p. 281, indicates the density of 'communities' in the west of Iran.

of Mary in southern Turkmenistan), and Khwarazm. There were bishops also in Abarshahr (later Nishapur), Tus, Herat and Sistan by the 5th century. Three cities of great eastern province of Khurasan, Nishapur, Marv and Herat, were represented at synods in Mesopotamia between 410 and 790; by 424 they were independent and autocephalous. By 544 Marv was a metropolitanate, and ranked seventh in seniority.[11] Merv was a major frontier region of the Iranian world, where the proximity of 'Turks' in the deserts to the north offered scope for missionary activity etc. A Hephthalite ['Turkic'] bishop (presumably responsible for an area of Soghd, i.e. the Samarqand region, and northern Bactria) was consecrated in 549 and the see (perhaps the Badghis-Qadishtan area) represented at a synod in 585. Herat in the late 6th century was also elevated to a metropolitanate.[12]

An oblique reference to Christians in Balkh, presently in northern Afghanistan, might be suggested by the 781 Christian stele found in Xian and 'dedicated to Issu (Jusbuzid) a priest from Balch [sic]'.[13]

Further Church of the East activity is known from the energetic patriarchate of Timothy I (779-823), when, for example, 4 monks were sent to Dailam and Gilan, along the southern Caspian littoral. Timothy claimed millions of followers, with 230 dioceses and 27 metropolitanates.[14]

Modern research summarises the following pattern of activity which contains important indicators (not all in Iran, of course): there were 19 metropolitanates in 820, and 25 in the 14th century; 105 bishoprics in 820, 96 in 1000, but 200 by the 14th century; metropolitanates in the 'East' were at Marv, Herat, Ray, Dailam and Samarqand.[15] It should be noted that the Christian communities seem to be in a slow decline by about 1000. The later increase by the 14th century must be ascribed to the easier political, but religiously more complex, situation during the Mongol period (13th-14th centuries). This arose from the situation among the peoples of Central Asia, where various groups of Christians had maintained a distant and difficult existence from ancient times. Their

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[11] The exact date is unknown but the Chronicle of Seert refers to a metropolitan in 524. See Erica C D Hunter, 'The Church of the East in Central Asia', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, Vol. 78, no. 3, autumn 1996, p. 129.

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 134; 141-42: '... the Syrian Orthodox population of Khurasan became such a threat that Patriarch Timothy I considered it expedient to install a good rhetorician in the metropolitanate of Herat.'

[13] Wilhem Baum and Dietmar W Winkler, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 60-61.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

influence was important among various groups including the Mongols who had a somewhat 'relaxed' attitude to religion. This important topic, however, is outside the scope of this paper.[16]

Thus there is no doubt that small groups of Christians with very long histories were and remained in Iran up to the present. In this respect they are not unlike the Zoroastrians. Such a heritage is part of the history of Iran and also part therefore of the heritage of the Shi'a.

Examples of contact with Iran in the modern period

In the wake of the Mongols invasions of the 13th century, a 14th century of much instability in the region and the meteoric career of Timur, a new Europe was slowly emerging from its Middle Ages, economically led by the Italian cities. During the 13th-15th centuries a number of European embassies go to points further east, seeking alliances (often against the Mamluks and later the Ottomans)—and trade concessions. Such embassies often had—indeed required—the endorsement of the Church in Rome. The influence of Italian city states, for example in the Caucasus and the Crimea, was extensive and some had establishments in Iranian cities, such as Tabriz. This also saw the involvement of Catholic missionaries. The presence of Armenian Christians was not insignificant in this development remained a factor in later contacts between Iran and Europe. The often painful national shape-shifting of the Armenians, and to some extent that of the Georgian Christian community in the Caucasus, seems to have been a target for the Catholic Church's efforts in the region.[17] Among the early arrivals were Franciscans and Dominicans who entered Iran in the late 13th century.

It may not be coincidental that the early translations of the Bible, or rather the Gospels, into modern Persian—one from the Greek tradition and the other from the Syriac—can be dated to the first part of the 14th century—at a time of renewed contacts.

Thus, dating from 718-28/1318-28 is a translation of the Gospels from the Greek by Sarkis Luj b. Amir Maleik, possibly an Armenian

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[16] See A Bausani, 'Religion under the Mongols', *Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 5, Cambridge, 1968, pp. 538-549.

[17] See F Richard, 'Cathohcisme et Islam chiite au "grand siècle"', *Etudes Docete*, XXXIII, Rome, 1980/3, 339.

Dominican, a copy of which was to be presented to the Mughal emperor of India, Akbar, in 1008-9/1600 through the Jesuit Manuel Pinheiro.[18]

The Bodleian Library's manuscript No. 1835 is an example of one of a number of manuscripts of a Persian translation of the Gospels, with introduction, by Yuhanna al-Qass Yusuf al-Ya'qubi, transcribed by Simon b. Yusuf b. Ibrahim al-Tabrizi, 1341, for Khwaja Amir b. Sahm al-Daulah b. Shirani Tiflisi at Kaffa (Theodosia) in the Crimea; the copy is dated Muharram 742/9 Tammuz 1341. Exactly why this version was prepared in Kaffa,[19] which was not a Persian-speaking region, remains unclear. This version was subsequently used in Walton's *Polyglot*: '... oldest and most renowned Persian translation ... from ... Syriac ...'[20]

The European Reformation and Counter-Reformation also led to European travellers and embassies being increasingly joined by, for example, Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, Carmelites and later Jesuits. However, further interest by Roman Catholic missions is focused on the 17th century when the Safavid dynasty in Iran seemed to offer a set of favourable conditions for Christian missions. This commenced with the entry of the Augustinians in 1601. The Carmelites were present in 1607 and became the most prominent society in Iran during this period. The Capuchins entered in 1628 and the Dominicans re-entered in 1670.[21] In due course many important cities in the Middle East—including cities in Iran, such as Isfahan and Shiraz, in the 17th century—saw establishments of religious orders, again looking to the Armenians in particular as initial points of contact.[22]

In many ways, whilst one must admire the fortitude and courage of such priests, it does not seem likely that they understood much of the region they were to visit and that their naïveté is a theme of such contacts for many, many years.

The Portuguese in the 'age of discovery', and in due course their Spanish masters, were also to have the endorsement of their religion. The priests that participated in the great journeys by sea and land also saw themselves as taking their 'true' faith to new lands. India in the

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[18] *EIr.*, 'Bible', p. 203.

[19] For the history of Kaffa see Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant au moyen age*, Paris, 1886, vol ii.

[20] H Ethé, *Catalogue of Persian, Turkish, Hindustani and Pushto Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, Part I, Oxford, 1889.

[21] See F Richard, *op. cit.*, p. 340ff and p. 373ff.

[22] *Ibid.*, especially p. 380ff.

late 16th/early 17th century seemed an attractive prospect for them, particularly because of the idiosyncratic religious outlook of the emperor Akbar (reg. 1556-1605) whose syncretistic aspirations to promulgate a faith incorporating bits of the main religions of India were seen as an opportunity not to be missed.

However, the intellectual/philosophical and theological powerhouse of the region by this time is dominated by Iran under the Safavid dynasty (1501-1732). The Safavid state was very significant in consolidating the Ithna 'Ashari (Twelver) Shi'a tradition throughout Iran. As well as being keen to develop economic prosperity and initiate an artistic revolution, it is also important to realise that they provided the mechanism for theological and intellectual development, most notably in the work of the Isfahan School, amongst which the names of Mir Damad (died 1631-32) and Mulla Sadra (1571-1640) especially stand out. The importance of the teaching of the latter in particular for modern Shi'ism in Iran should not be underestimated. Western students of the period have the copious work of Henry Corbin,[23] and others, who have done much to bring the importance of this aspect of Shi'a tradition to the notice of Western audiences. It is this tradition which today marks out Iran from its neighbours.

Against this vigorous intellectual tradition of Iranian Shi'ism, incoming Catholic priests from the distant West faced a formidable task. The following episode may help illustrate this.

The Mughal court in India under Akbar at the end of the 16th century sought through its diplomatic contacts knowledge of Western Christianity. Various priests, usually Jesuits, were sent up to the court from the Portuguese enclave in Goa. Among them was the Jesuit, Jerome Xavier (1549-1617), nephew of Francis Xavier. Jerome and his colleagues were pressed for a description of their religion in Persian by the Great Mughal. Indeed, Jerome had copies made of the translation of the Gospels by Sarkis Luj b. Amir Maleik (mentioned above).[24]

In consequence of the demands of the court Jerome produced, with the assistance of local *munshis*, works in Persian which described the life of Jesus. He also undertook a polemic—initially written in Spanish (*Fuenta*

[23] Corbin, Henry, *En Islam iranien: aspects spirituels et philosophiques*, Gallimard, Paris, 2nd ed., 1978. 4 vols., especially vol 4 *L'école d'Ispahan, l'école shaykhie, le douzième imam*, and *ibid.*, *La philosophie iranienne islamique aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, Buchet-Chastel, Paris, 1981.

[24] A copy of the ms is in the National Library, Lisbon, ms. 7965. See R. Gulbenkian, *The Translation of the Four Gospels into Persian*, NRSM, Immensee, 1981, p. 5-90.

da Vida, 'The Fount of Life'),[25] which was rendered into Persian with the title *A'ina-yi Haqq-nama* ('The Truth-revealing Mirror')[26]—which sought to show the superiority of Christianity over Islam. This treatise consists of five books. A wide range of topics are considered in a rather contrived dialogue between priest, mulla and 'philosopher'. The themes treated in this work are wide-ranging and include under the main headings:

> Book 1, On the knowledge of God and his true Law.
> Book 2, The things of God as taught by the Law of the Christians and their conformity with reason.
> Book 3, The divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
> Book 4, The requirements of the Law of the Christians and that of the Muslims
> Book 5, The aids provided by the Law of the Christians for living in the service of the Creator, and of the great advantage it has over that of the Muslims and others.

It is noteworthy that the response to this work did not come from within India. It came from Iran, whose intellectual dominance extended into the courts of northern India. Indeed, it was a student and son-in-law of Mir Damad, the very eminent Amir Sayyid Ahmad b. Zayn al-'Abidin 'Alawi[27] (who died between 1644-50), and who was a contemporary of Mulla Sadra, who wrote a rebuff[28] to *A'ini-yi Haqq-nama* in 1032/1623 (but of an abridgement only)[29] under the title *Misqal-i Safa dar tajliya va tasfiya-yi A'ina-yi Haqqnama* ('The Polisher of Purity in Revealing the Brightness and Purity of "The Truth-revealing Mirror"').[30]

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[25] The apparently unique Spanish version is in Rome, in the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus, ms. ARSI, Opp. NN. 259. An edition by Hughes Didier is in the press.

[26] Several manuscripts exist, as well as its abridgement, in, for example, London (British Library Ms Harl 5478), Edinburgh, St Petersburg, Cambridge, Rome, etc. See Arnulf Camps, OFM, *Jerome Xavier SJ and the Muslims of the Mogol Empire, Controversial Works and Missionary Activity*, Nouvelle Revue de Science Missionaire, Schöneck-Beckenried [Switzerland], 1957, p. 17ff.

[27] Corbin, *En Islam Iranien*, iv, 26ff. His work includes a significant commentary on Avicenna.

[28] After F Richard, *op. cit.*, p. 383ff. In 1031/1622 he refuted the apology of Della Valle in *Lavami' al-Rabbaniyya fi radd al-shubah al-Nasraniyya*.

[29] See p. 387 for Chézaud's note to Sayyid Ahmad's son referring to his use of the *muntakhab*.

[30] Extant manuscripts, e.g. in Tehran, A Tabataba'i, cat. Majlis II, no. 715; another is in the British Library, Add. 25,857; composed 1032 AH. See Charles Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, vol. 1, London, 1879, pp. 28-29, which includes an account—related in the ms—of how the author was shown Xavier's work (in an abridgment) by two priests, Juan and Brio (?) in 1032/1622-23. A printed edition is available, ed. Hamid Naji Isfahani, Tehran, 137 3sh./1994. See also H Corbin, 'Conference ...', *Annuaire / Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes: 5e section: Sciences religieuses* 1976-77, pp. 273-78.

Thus it is Shi'a scholars—in Iran—and not the Sunnis of India who responded to Jerome's work.

In due course, the Vatican arranged for an appropriate response. 1628 De Propaganda Fide issued a refutation by Fr Bonaventura Malvasia, but it was judged inadequate, so Filippo Guadagnoli published in 1631 *Apologia pro christiana religione qua respondetur ad objectiones Ahmed filii Zin alabedin Persae Aspahanensis, contentas in libro inscripto Politor Speculi.* This was translated into Arabic but not Persian.

A further, final flourish was in 1656, when Fr Aimé Chézaud (who was born Lyon, lived in Aleppo and Isfahan [Julfa] where he died in 1664) wrote a two-volume refutation of *Misqal* which was called *Alayeshha-yi ki bi-danha aluda shuda A'ina-yi Haqqnama az musayqalish* ('The Stains which have tainted the "The Truth-revealing Mirror" by its being polished').[31]

From initial studies of the work of Jerome, it seems that his is not an outstanding work of theology, but somehow it forms the basis of a missioner's handbook—perhaps by default, in the absence of any other. It is also likely that the types of arguments put forward by Jerome Xavier are similar to those previously used in Christian-Muslim debate.[32] However, it never seems clear from the circumstances of the missions working in the region that there are clear objectives and thus what strategies are to be adopted to achieve the aims. We look in vain for a coherent 'mission statement' from these priests and their superiors.

There are of course ongoing and later Christian contacts with Iran. These are renewed with some vigour in the 19th century when efforts at reconciliation with the local ancient Churches come to the fore. The interest in the local Churches,[33] with the familiar emphasis on Armenian communities, also meant that Western efforts in this sphere would not arouse the indignation and opposition of Muslim sensibilities about any overt proselytising among Muslims.

Catholic missionary work in Persia begins again in 1840 with the Lazarists mainly working in the north west, where there were many

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[31] See Richard, *op. cit.*, p. 384ff.

[32] I am grateful to Professor Rifaat Ebied, of the University of Sydney, for kindly confirming this view *prima facie.*

[33] For a summary of the later dialogues and reconciliation with local Christian traditions and the Catholic Church, see, for example, S Brock, 'The Syriac Churches in Ecumenical Dialogue on Christology', in (ed.) A O'Mahony, *Eastern Christianity. Studies in Modern History, Religion and Politics,* London, 2004, pp. 44-65.

Armenians. The Lazarists were joined later on by the French Sisters of Charity. The Lazarists established themselves at Tehran in 1862.

In 1872 the Prefecture Apostolic of Persia was raised to the dignity of an Apostolic Delegation, with an Archbishop of Heraclea appointed as the Administrator of the Diocese of Isfahan. This removed the Persian Mission from the jurisdiction of the Apostolic Delegation of Mesopotamia. Efforts remained focused on those peripheral areas where there were communities of traditional Christians.

As well as Catholic ones, there is also Protestant interest in the country especially in the 19th century when it became part of a sort of crypto-imperialist bullying of Iran, mainly by the British. The small Christian communities of Iran dating from ancient times, and the much larger Armenian community (especially that transplanted into Isfahan by the Safavids from their northern borders with the Ottomans), are often seen as historical curiosities by these Western Christian groups.

One important Protestant group,[34] for example, was the United Presbyterian Mission which came to Iran in 1834. Their work included Bible translation and literature and later they built schools and hospitals. The initial strategy of the early missions revolved around the ancient churches. However, the Protestant missions did have a reasonable measure of success among the Jews. Numbers of converts from Islam were small.

American Protestant missionaries were well established in Urmiah, in the north-east and in an area where the Armenian presence was nearby and where there was a significant community of the Church of the East, but were overtaken by the Catholic presence. Catholic missionaries in turn had a difficult time because of the currents of intrigue between Russians, the opposition of the church of the East; and French interests, all competing within the somewhat rickety structure of 19th century Qajar Iran.

Continuing efforts among Catholics in the 20th century are seen for example in the Dominican presence, especially in the person of Cyprian Rice OP. This English friar (1889-1966) spent a number of years, notably in the 1920s and 1930s working in the Middle East and Iran. Significantly Rice saw the need to master Persian and study its culture deeply, a task which he undertook with great success. He taught and preached in Persian. However, the Dominican mission was subject to a host of local problems,

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[34] Dehqani-Tafti discusses various other Christian organisations, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, especially chapters 6 and 7.

disagreements within different factions of the order and fluctuations in the enthusiasm of Rome. The mission was closed in 1934.[35]

Up to very recently, the forms of contact between the two traditions were essentially confrontational, or were perceived to be so. Incoming groups and mission were regarded with a familiar suspicion by the Iranian authorities as being another example of the insidious influence and ambition of Western power-play, a perception which racked Iran's rulers from the early 19th century onwards.[36]

Points of mutual interest

The dialogue at Ampleforth in a way continues the contacts made throughout the centuries. However, with this significant difference: the aim here is to understand more of the respective traditions and their common areas in tradition and concern. In the modern world, there seems perhaps now more pushing us together than driving us apart. The confrontational postures of the past serve no purpose.

A long history of contact between the two faith communities in Iran may well have meant that certain ideas, emphases and practices of the respective groupings were more than familiar to the other. Certainly from the Catholic/Christian standpoint, there are a number of areas where Catholics might—*prima facie*—almost feel 'at home' in the Shi'a tradition.[37] However, we should beware any false or implied convergence at these points because of their similarity. They may simply be common solutions to common problems. Among such areas we may note:

a) suffering, passion and martyrdom; for Shi'a, of course, especially the events at Karbala'.
b) The respect for and position of 'Isa/Jesus, not just in the Qur'an in general, but also in the Ithna 'Ashari *hadith*.[38]

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[35] See Anthony O'Mahony, 'Cyprian Rice, OP, L'Islam chiite et la mission dominicaine en Perse-Iran, 1933-34', *Les Dominicains et les mondes musulmans, Mémoire Dominicaine* 15, Cerf, Paris, 2001, pp. 217-25. Rice also produced a study of the Persian mystical tradition, *The Persian Sufis*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1964.

[36] Cf. the situation under the Sasanians noted above.

[37] Many of these areas are discussed in Bill and Williams, *op. cit.*

[38] See, for example, Mahdi Muntazir Qa'im, *Jesus Through Shi'ite Narrations*, trans. Al-Hajj Muhammad Legenhausen, Ansariyan, Qum, 2004.

c) The respective positions of Mary/Maryam and Fatima.
d) The idea of the infallibility of the Imams.
e) The veneration of saints/*awliya'*/*imamzadeh*, with the many local shrines, prayer for intercession etc. Among ordinary Iranians there is a simple devotion to their Shi'a faith which is rarely seen in modern Christian communities.
f) Shi'a Islam has a 'hierarchy' and a potential flexibility/pragmatism not found in the Sunni world; in this it is aided by its vast Imami *hadith* resources, theology, its historical experience and traditional willingness to dissimulate as required.

A great deal of historical research remains to be done on tracing the development of these themes within the context of Iran and to evaluate where they may have been any mutual influences. The great temptation is to see a relationship where none exists. In some cases the themes antedate both traditions. The parallels need to be carefully explored within their respective historical, doctrinal, political and cultural contexts.

What does this dialogue in which we are participating mean today? For us in the West, Shi'a Islam has become almost synonymous with Iran which has chosen a particular 'unique' political path in recent years, i.e. the Khomeini revolution and the Islamic state. Iran's political and strategic importance means we must have a better understanding of it for the future. We need also to be aware of Iran's immense heritage of spirituality, not only in its Shi'a tradition but also in its mystical *(sufi)* tradition (which we have not considered).

Both Catholics and Shi'a face a world of increasing secularisation, where Western science, capitalism and much of its society is the current, successful paradigm. Western science is only interested in what it can measure, and it sees no qualitative difference in reality. This has already had a considerable impact on Western Christianity. Is this course also an inevitable one for Islam? Certainly, our respective experiences ought to be appreciated, especially when we look to our obligations to future generations. Is Iran's option a viable one?

We share a common set of problems. Some understanding of how each is facing these difficulties must be to the advantage of all.

In such areas I believe lies the importance of a forum such as this. The pace of change throughout the world must alarm all traditional societies. Perhaps there is a paradox—or a point at least not without irony—that the US, the exemplar, the great leader of

the Western system and now the self-appointed arbiter of the world's morals, would believe it has reached this pre-eminence because of its traditional, Christian values.

Many years ago when I was a student studying the area, I met many eminent Western scholars of Islam and, of course, many learned Muslims. There were and are many Westerners who know a great deal about Islam and, also, Iran. Yet, until a few years ago I could almost count on the fingers of one hand those born as Muslims who had any serious knowledge or even any interest in Christianity. I am pleased to say that today in this place that situation can be clearly seen to be no longer true.

The very fact that we have participated in this dialogue, a group of Shi'a, Iranian clerics and scholars meeting their Christian counterparts in a Benedictine abbey, is testament to how far we have all progressed in recent years.

I hope it means that we all want—and understand that—we need to know more. Perhaps I might therefore end with these words—albeit out of context—of Mulla Sadra:

> 'Know that knowledge is the root of every felicity and ignorance is the foundation of every misery.'[39]

[39] Mulla Sadra Shirazi, *On the Hermeneutics of the Light Verse of the Qur'an*, translated, introduced and annotated by Latimah-Parvin Peerwani, ICAS Press, London, 2004, p. 136.

THE RULE AND PRAYER

Fr Bonaventure Knollys OSB

The best way to understand the Rule of Benedict is to see its position in the history of Christian monks. The first three hundred years saw the Christian Church develop in the face of persecution and martyrdom. As Christianity began to be accepted in society, there were those who wished to pursue a life of total dedication to God by turning their backs on society and going out into the desert. Here living without marriage, by the labour of their hands and without possessions, they spent their time in prayer. Many of those came to be regarded as spiritual masters, so that others who came to be monks, became disciples of these first *Abbas*.

While some of the disciples lived as hermits, in cells set apart from their masters, others gathered together to live in communities, so that the *abba* was not just a spiritual teacher, but the director of a group of men, who lived in a monastery. Some of these held over a thousand monks, and in order to maintain discipline the *abba* would write out a rule of life, both spiritual and practical.

It was in this tradition that an Italian Abba named Benedict ('Blessed' in Latin) wrote a rule that collected the best ideas from the writings of previous generations of monks. It was a very successful rule, largely because of its discretion both as to what it contained and to what it left out.

At first reading, Benedict's rule can seem rather severe. The monk is asked to leave behind everything, especially his own desires, and put himself under complete obedience to his *Abba*, who at this time came to be called an *Abbot*. Permission to speak was rarely given; and permission to laugh never. Meat was forbidden, except to the sick; and private possessions of any kind were condemned. Everything was held in common and monks only had the use of what the Abbot permitted.

Why then should anyone wish to join a monastery. Interestingly, the Rule says that those who wished to join should be discouraged and kept waiting outside for several days. If they persisted they should spend a year in special training while all the difficulties of monastic life are made clear. The community, on their part, should test them to see if they truly sought God: if they were looking for prayer, for obedience and for hardships. At the end of a year the newcomer should take vows, promising obedience, stability in the community, and faithfulness to the monastic way of life, including celibacy and poverty.

Let me look at the positive aspects of the Rule. We are told that if things seem a little strict it is in order to correct faults and to preserve love. We are encouraged to persevere and not to run away, so that *if we progress in this way of life, our hearts shall be enlarged and we shall run on the path of God's commandments with unspeakable love.* That is the purpose of monastic life. If I call it a love affair with God, I might be accused of being too flowery in my speech. But I am sure that all the hard sayings of the Rule make sense only when seen as preparing us to be truly open to God.

To be in his presence demands a measure of silence; lovers need to be alone together. To grow in love, one needs to be forgetful of self so as to attend to the needs of the beloved. Nothing is more difficult for an elderly bachelor who gets married than to subordinate the habits of a lifetime to his new relationship. Benedict's Rule is calculated to lay us open to the loving attentions of God, who is, as the Bible says, a jealous God, who will never be content with less than the gift of our whole selves.

Much of the Rule describes the arrangement of the day: the hours of prayer starting before dawn, the time for work or for reading, the times for meals, all depending on the season of the year, and ensuring a balance between prayer, work and leisure. By leisure he means reading rather than holidays: meditating or listening to the Word of God, Lectio, as it is called. Here the monk gently picks his way though scripture or the commentaries, rather as a cow picks its way through a meadow, nibbling a morsel here or a leaf there, and sometimes stopping to chew the cud.

Lectio puts us in the presence of God and so leads to prayer. For monks, prayer can be recitation in common from the Scriptures, mostly the Psalms and other writings inherited from the Jewish faith. We are then praying the same prayers that Jesus prayed and which express every variety of human experience. There is another kind of prayer, when we pray privately as we are inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Rule says that our

prayer is pleasing to God for our purity of heart or sorrow for our faults, not for the number of our words. We are given no instructions for prayer but are told, 'If anyone wants to pray, let him simply go into the oratory and pray, not in a loud voice but with tears and devotion. (The idea of prayer with tears is perhaps no longer the custom in Western monasteries. Are we too intellectual and afraid of our emotions? I am aware that it is still a feature of prayer among Muslims.)

So there is no set tradition of prayer at Ampleforth. Some may pray with words, expressing their feelings and desires. Others may pray using short phrases, often repeated, which quieten the imagination and leave the spirit free to be with God. Others may pray in total silence, caught up in God's presence, though this is usually only for short periods, after which we must return to searching for God through our minds and imagination.

Perhaps I can make a reflection on prayer. St Benedict asks if the newcomer truly seeks God, but in the Prologue to his rule he quotes from the Psalms, 'Before you call on me, I will say to you, "Here I am."' How can we who are creatures hope to find God, when it is God who came to find us, to reveal himself to us, through his prophets and through his Word? What we try to do in prayer, is what we do during the rest of our time in the monastery: we put ourselves in the way of his coming, not physically but spiritually.

But we are also a community. We are urged to find Christ in our brothers: the stranger, the sick, the old. We are urged to live in peace with the brethren and to tolerate one another's faults and weaknesses. There is a great sense of discretion. The Abbot must take care that everything is arranged so that the monks will have no cause to complain. He must vary his treatment according to the character of the monks, being strict with one and forgiving with another. Provision is made for ordinary human weakness: bad-tempered old men, monks who oversleep, brethren who see the jobs they are given are beyond their powers. It is striking that the Rule even allows wine in moderation.

I want to make a final comment on the Rule. Monks, like other religious people are capable of endless self-deception. We think we are holy when we are not. The Rule gives a special place to Truthfulness, or Humility as it is called. In twelve elaborate steps we are shown the stages a monk goes though who becomes truly forgetful of self. He recognises his own sins, he accepts his status as a creature and is glad to be of no

special importance in the eyes of others. He does not draw attention to himself through loud talk or laughter. He accepts whatever treatment he is given.

In another passage we are urged *not to desire a reputation for holiness. First of all, be holy; then only will there be any point in having a reputation for it.* And so Benedict tells us that this is *a little rule for beginners* and if we keep it we are no more than starting on the path of virtue, and should still count ourselves as idle, unobservant and negligent monks.